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"Whatever comes of it after this [in Russia] every one in the world should be plainly told of what took place in those first weeks. For it was a dazzling revelation of the deep, deep powers for brotherhood and friendliness that lie buried in mankind. I was no dreamer; I was a chemist, a scientist, used to dealing with facts. All my life I had smiled at social dreams as nothing but Utopias. But in those days I was wholly changed, for I could feel beneath my feet this brotherhood like solid ground. There is no end to what men can do — for there is no limit to their good will, if only they can be shown the way."

TARASOV, in Ernest Poole's "The Village."

"I am the way . . ."

JESUS CHRIST.

NOTE

These stories are told in the words of Calliope Marsh. Wherever I have myself intruded a word, it is with apology to her. I chronicle her stories as faithfully as I am able, faults and all, and, through her, the affairs of the village, reflecting in its small pool the people and the stars.

And always I hear most clearly as her conclusion: "Life is something other than that which we believe it to be."

ZONA GALE.

Portage, Wisconsin, 1919.

30526

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	The Feast of Nations	1
II	Peace in Friendship Village	20
III	The Story of Jeffro	45
IV	When Nick Nordman Came Back Home	75
V	Being Good to Letty	98
VI	Something Plus	104
VII	The Art and Loan Dress Exhibit	130
VIII	Rose Pink	154
IX	Peace	185
X	Dream	205
XI	The Brother-Man	232
XII	The Cable	256
XIII	When the Hero Came Home	273
XIV	"Folks"	293

PEACE IN FRIENDSHIP VILLAGE

THE FEAST OF NATIONS [1]

THREE-FOUR of us older ones were down winding up Red Cross, and eight-ten of our daughters were helping; not my daughter — I ain't connect'— but Friendship Village daughters in general. Or I don't know but it was us older ones that were helping them. Anyway, Red Cross was being wound up from being active, and the rooms were going to be rented to a sewing-machine man. And that night we were to have our final entertainment in the Friendship Village Opera House, and we were all going to be in it.

There was a sound from the stairs like something walking with six feet, and little Achilles Poulaki came in. He always stumbled even when there was nothing in sight but the floor — he was that age. He was the Sykeses' grocery delivery boy, that Mis' Sykes thinks is her social secretary as well, and he'd been errand boy for us all day.

1 Copyright, *Red Cross Magazine*, April, 1919.

"Anything else, Mis' Sykes?" he says.

"I wonder," says Mis' Sykes, "if Killy can't take that basket of cotton pieces down to old Mis' Herman, for her woolen rugs?"

We all thought he could, and some of the girls went to work to find the basket for him.

"Killy," I says, "I hear you can speak a nice Greek piece."

He didn't say anything. He hardly ever did say anything.

"Can you?" I pressed him, because somebody had been telling me that he could speak a piece his Greek grandfather had taught him.

"Yes'm," he says.

"Will you?" I took it further.

"No'm," he says, in exactly the same tone.

"You ought to speak it for me," I said. "I'm going to be Greece in the show to-night."

But they brought the basket then, and he went off with it. He was a little thin-legged chap — such awful thin legs he had, and a pale neck, and cropped hair, and high eyebrows and big, chapped hands.

"Don't you drop it, now!" says Mis' Sykes, that always uses a club when a sliver would do it.

Achilles straightened up his thin little shoulders and threw out his thin little chest, and says he:

"My grandfather was in the gover'ment."

"Go *on!*" says Mis' Sykes. "In Greece?"

"Sure," he says — which wasn't Greek talk,

though I bet Greek boys have got something like it.

Then Achilles was scared to think he'd spoke, and he run off, still stumbling. His father had been killed in a strike in the Friendship mills, and his mother was sick and tried to sew some; and she hadn't nothing left that wasn't married, only Achilles.

The work went on among us as before, only I always waste a lot of time watching the girls work. I love to see girls working together — they seem to touch at things with the tips of their fingers. They remind me of butterflies washing out their own wings. And yet what a lot they could get done, and how capable they got to be. Ina Clare and Irene Ayres and Ruth Holcomb and some more — they were packing up and making a regular lark of it. Seemed like they were so big and strong and young they could do 'most anything. Seemed like it was a shame to close down Red Cross and send them back to their separate church choirs and such, to operate in, exclusive.

That was what I was thinking when Mis' Silas Sykes broke in — her that's the leading woman of the Friendship Village caste of folks.

"I don't know," says Mis' Sykes, "I don't know but pride is wicked. But I can*not* help feeling pride that I've lived in Friendship Village for three generations of us, unbroken. And for three generations back of that we were American, on American soil,

under the American flag — as soon as ever it got here."

"*Was* you?" I says. "Well, a strain of me is English, and a touch of me way back was Scotch-Irish; and I've got a little Welsh. And I'd like to find some Indian, but I haven't ever done it. And I'm proud of all them, Mis' Sykes."

Mis' Hubbelthwait spoke up — her that's never been able to get a plate really to fit her, and when she talks it bothers out loud.

"I got some of nearly all the Allies in me," she says, complacent.

"*What?*" says Mis' Sykes.

"Yes, sir," says Mis' Hubbelthwait. "I was counting up, and there ain't hardly any of 'em I ain't."

"Japanese?" says Mis' Sykes, withering. "How interesting, Mis' Hubbelthwait," says she.

"Oh, I mean Europe," says Mis' Hubbelthwait, cross. "Of course you can't descend from different continents. There's English — I've got that. And French — I've got that. And I-talian is in me — I know that by my eyes. And folks that come from County Galway has Spanish —"

"Spain ain't ally," says Mis' Fire Chief Merriman, majestic. "It's neuter."

"Well, there's that much more credit — to be allies *and* neuter," says Mis' Hubbelthwait triumphant.

"Well, sir," says Mis' Holcomb-that-was-Mame Bliss. "I ain't got anything in me but sheer American — you can't beat that."

"How'd you manage that, Mame?" I ask her. "Kind of a trick, wasn't it?"

"I don't know what you mean," she says. And went right on over my head, like she does. "Ain't it nice, ladies," she says, "to be living in the very tip-top nation of this world?"

"Except of course England," says Mis' Jimmy Sturgis.

"Why except England?" snaps Mame Holcomb.

"Oh well, we all know England's the grandest nation," says Mis' Sturgis. "Don't the sun never set on her possessions? Don't she rule the wave? Ain't she got the largest city? And all like that?"

Mame looked mad.

"Well, I'm sure I don't know," she says. "But from the time I studied g'ography I always understood that no nation could touch us Americans."

"Why," says Mis' Sturgis, "I *love* America best. But I never had any doubts that England that my folks came from was the most important country."

Mis' Holcomb made her mouth both tight and firm.

"Their gover'ment beats ours, I s'pose?" she says. "You know very well you can't beat our gover'ment."

Berta, Mis' Sykes's little Switzerland maid, spoke up.

"Oh," she says, "I guess Sweetzerland has got the nicest gover'ment. Everybody speaks so nice of that."

Mame looked over at me, behind Berta. But of course we wouldn't say a word to hurt the poor little thing's feelings.

Up spoke that new Mis' Antonio, whose husband has the fluff rug store.

"Of course," she says, "nothing has Rome but Italy."

We kep' still for a minute. Nobody could contradict that.

"I feel bad," said Mis' Antonio, "for the new countries — America, England — that have not so much old history in them. And no old sceneries."

Berta spoke up again. "Yes, but then who's got part of the Alps?" she wanted to know, kind of self-conscious.

Mame Holcomb looked around, sort of puzzled.

"Rome used to be nice," she admitted, "and of course the Alps is high. But everybody knows they can't hold a candle to the United States, all in all."

After that we worked on without saying anything. It seemed like pretty near everything had been said.

Pretty soon the girls had their part all done. And they stood up, looking like rainbows in their pretty furs and flowers.

" Miss Calliope," Ina Clare said to me, " come on with us to get some things for to-night."

" Go with you and get out of doing any more work? " says I, joyful. " Well, won't I! "

" But we are working," cried Ruth. " We've got oceans of things to collect."

" Well," says I, " come along. Sometimes I can't tell work from play and this is one of the times."

I thought that more than once while I went round with them in Ruth's big car late that afternoon. How do you tell work from play when both are the right kind? How do we know that some day play won't be only just the happiest kind of work, done joyful and together?

" I guess you're going to miss this kind of work when Red Cross stops," I said to them.

Ruth is tall and powerful and sure, and she drives as if it was only one of the things she knows about.

" Miss it? " she said. " We'll be *lost* — simply. What we're going to do I don't know."

" We've been some use in the world," said Clare, " and now we've got to go back to being nothing but happy."

" We'll have to play bridge five nights a week to keep from being bored to tears," says Irene — that is pretty but she thinks with her scalp and no more.

Ruth, that's the prettiest of them all, she shook her head.

" We can't go back to that," she said. " At

least, I *won't* go back to that. But what I'm going on to do I don't know."

What were they going on to do? That was what I kept wondering all the while we gathered up the finishing touches of what we wanted for the stage that night.

"Now the Greek flag," said Ruth finally. "Mis' Sykes said we could get that at Mis' Poulaki's."

That was Achilles' mother, and none of us had ever met her. We went in, real interested. And there in the middle of the floor sat Mis' Poulaki looking over the basket of cotton rags that the Red Cross had sent down by Achilles to old Mis' Herman.

"Oh," says little Mis' Poulaki, "you sent me such grand clothes for my rags. Thank you — thank you!"

She had tears in her eyes, and there wasn't one of us would tell her Achilles had just plain stole them for her.

"It is everything," she said to us in her broken talk. "Achilles, he had each week two dollar from Mr. Sykes. But it is not enough. I have hard time. Hard."

Over the lamp shelf I saw, just then, the picture of a big, handsome man; and out of being kind of embarrassed, I asked who he was.

"Oh," says Mis' Poulaki, "he's Achilles' grandfather — the father of my boy's father. He was

officer of the Greek gover'ment," she added, proud. "He taught my boy a piece to speak — something all the Greek boys learn."

I told her I'd heard about that piece; and then we asked for the Greek flag, and Mis' Poulaki got it for us, but she said:

"Would you leave Achilles carry it for you? He like that."

We said "yes," and got out as soon as possible — it seemed so sad, love of a country and stealing all mixed up promiscuous in one little boy.

Out by the car there was a whole band of little folks hanging round examining it. They were all going to be in the drill at the entertainment that night, and they all came running to Ruth that had trained them.

"Listen," she said to us, and then she held up her hand to them. "All say 'God bless you' in your own language."

They shouted it — a Bedlam, a Babylon. It seems there were about fourteen different nations of them, more or less, living around down there — it wasn't a neighborhood we'd known much about. They were cute little bits, all of them; and I felt better about taking part in the performance, at my age, for the children were so cute nobody would need to look at us.

Just as we got in the car, Achilles Poulaki came running home to his supper — one of the kind of

suppers, I suppose, that would be all right, what there was of it; and enough of it, such as it was. When he see us, his eyes got wide and dark and scared — it was terrible to see that look in that little boy's face, that had stole to help his mother. We told him about the Greek flag, and his face lit, and he said he'd bring it. But he stood there staring at us, when we drove away.

His look was haunting me still when I went into the Friendship Village Opera House that night for the Red Cross final entertainment. "The Feast of Nations," it was going to be, and us ladies had worked at it hard and long, and using recipes we were not accustomed to using.

There's many different kinds of excitement in this vale of tears, but for the sheer, top-notch variety give me the last few minutes before the curtain goes up on a home-talent entertainment in a little town. All the different kinds of anxiety, apprehension and amateur agony are there together, and gasping for utterance.

For instance, Mis' Fire Chief Merriman was booked to represent a Jugo-Slav. None of us ladies knew how it ought to be done, so we had fixed up kind of a neutral costume of red, white and blue that couldn't be so very far out of the way. But the last minute Mis' Merriman got nervous for fear there'd be a Jugo-Slav in the audience, and she balked out on going on, and it took all we could do to persuade

her. And then the Balkans got nervous — we weren't any of us real clear about the Balkans. And we didn't know whether the Dolomites was states or mountains, so we left them out altogether. But we'd been bound the little nations were going to be represented whether anybody else was or not — and there we were, nations of Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, the Americas and the provinces, and somebody for every one of them. And for a curtain we'd sewed all the flags of every nation together because we were so sick and tired of the advertisements and the pink lady on the old Opera House curtain.

It's no part of my purpose, as the orators say, to tell about the Friendship Village "Feast of Nations" entire. It would take sheets. To mention the mere mistakes and misadventures of that evening would be Arabian Nights long. Us ladies were the nations, and the young girls were the spirits — Liberty, Democracy, To-morrow, Humanity, Raw Materials, Trade Routes, the High Seas, Disputed Territory, Commerce, Peace, and like that. There ought to have been one more, and she did come all dressed up and ready, in white with gold and silver on her; and then she sat flat down on a scaffold, and she says:

"I *can* not do it. I *can* not pronounce me. I shall get," she says wild, "nothing said out loud but a whisper. And what *is* the use?"

We gathered round her, and we understood.

None of us could pronounce her easy, especially when scared. She was Reciprocity.

"Make a sign," says somebody, "make a sign with her name on it, and hold it over her head."

But that was no better, because nobody could spell her, either, including her herself. So we give it up, and she went down in the audience and looked on.

"It's all right," says Mis' Sykes. "Nobody knows what it means, anyway."

"No," says I, "but think of the work her mother's put on her dress."

And we all knew what that meant, anyway; and we all felt bad, and thought mebbe the word would be more in use by the next show we give, if any.

About in the middle of the program, just after Commerce and Raw Materials and Disputed Territory tried to raise a row, and had got held in place by Humanity, Mis' Sykes came to me behind the scenes. She was Columbia, of course, and she was dressed in the United States flag, and she carried an armful of all the other flags. We had had all we could do to keep her from wearing a crown — she'd been bound and determined to wear a crown, though we explained to her that crowns was going out of fashion and getting to be very little worn.

"But they're so regal!" she kept saying, grieving.

"Crowns are all right," we had agreed with her. "It's the regal part that we object to. Not on Columbia you don't put no crown!"

And we made her wear a wreath of stars. But the wreath was near over one eye when she came to me there, between the acts.

"Killy Poulaki," she says, "he stole that whole basket of stuff we sent down to old Mis' Herman by him. Mis' Herman found it out."

"For his ma, though," I says pitiful.

"Ma or no ma, stole is stole," says Mis' Sykes. "We're going to make an example of him."

And I thought: "First we starve Achilles on two dollars a week, and then when he steals for his ma, we make an example of him. Ain't there anything else for him. . . ."

There wasn't time to figure it out, because the flag curtain was parting for the children — the children that came capering up to do their drill, all proud and pleased and important. They didn't represent anything only themselves — the children of all the world. And Ruth Holcomb stood up to drill them, and she was the *Spirit of To-morrow.*

The curtains had parted on the empty stage, and *To-morrow* had stepped out alone and given a short, sharp word. And all over the house, where they were sitting with their families, they hopped up, boys and girls, and flashed into the aisles. And the orchestra started them, and they began to sing and march to the stage, and went through what Ruth had taught them.

Nothing military. Nothing with swords or any-

thing of that. But instead, a little singing dance as they came up to meet *To-morrow.* And she gave them a star, a bird, a little pretend animal, a flower, a lyre, a green branch, a seed, and she told them to go out and make the world more beautiful and glad. They were willing! That was something they knew about already. They lined up at the footlights and held out their gifts to the audience. And it made it by far the more wonderful that we knew the children had really come from so many different nations, every one with its good gift to give to the world.

You know how they looked — how all children look when you give them something like that to do. Dear and small and themselves, so that you swallow your whole throat while you watch. Because they *are* To-morrow, and they want life to be nice, and they think it's going to be — but we haven't got it fixed up quite right for them yet. We're late.

As they stood there, young and fine and ready, Ruth, that was *To-morrow,* said:

"Now!"

They began speaking together, clear and strong and sweet. My heart did more things to my throat while I looked at them.

"I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Somebody punched at me, violent.

"Ain't it magnificent to hear 'em say it?" says Mis' Sykes. "Ain't it truly magnificent?"

But I was looking at Achilles and thinking of her being willing to make an example of him instead of helping him, and thinking, too, of his two dollars a week.

"It is if it is," says I, cryptic.

To-morrow was speaking again.

"Those of you whose fathers come from Europe, hold up your hands."

Up shot maybe twenty hands — scraggy and plump, and Achilles' little thin arm in the first row among them.

And at the same minute, out came us ladies, marching from the wings — all those of us that represented the different countries of the world; and we formed back of the children, and the stage was full of the nations of Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, the Americas, the islands and all.

And *To-morrow* asked:

"What is it that your fathers have sworn to, so that you now all belong to one nation?"

Then we all said it with the children — waveringly at first, swelling, mounting to full chorus, the little bodies of the children waving from side to side as we all recited it:

"I absolutely and entirely renounce and adjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty, and particularly to —"

Here was a blur of sound as all the children named the ruler of the state from which their fathers had come.

"— of whom I have heretofore been subject . . . that I will support and defend the constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign or domestic, and bear true faith and allegiance to the same, so help me God. . . ."

Before they had finished, I began to notice something. I stood on the end, and Achilles was just near me. He had looked up and smiled at me, and at his Greek flag that I was carrying. But now, while the children recited together, Achilles stood there with them saying not one word. And then, when the names of the rulers all blurred together, Achilles scared me, for he put up the back of his hand as if to rub tears from his eyes. And when they all stopped speaking, only his sobbing broke the stillness of the hall.

I don't know how it came to me, save that things do come in shafts of light and splendor that no one can name; but in that second I knew what ailed him. Maybe I knew because I remembered the picture of his grandfather on the wall over the lamp shelf. Anyway, the big pang came to me to speak out, like it does sometimes, when you have to say what's in you or die.

"*To-morrow!*" I cried out to Ruth, and I was glad she had her back to the audience so they couldn't

see how scared she looked at me speaking what wasn't in my part. "*To-morrow!* I am Greece! I ask that this little Greek boy here say the words that his Greek grandfather taught him!"

Ruth looked at Achilles and nodded, and I saw his face brighten all of a sudden through his tears; and I knew he was going to speak it, right out of his heart.

Achilles began to speak, indistinct at first, then getting clearer, and at last his voice went over the hall loud and strong and like he meant it:

"'We will never bring disgrace to this our city by any act of dishonor or cowardice, nor ever desert our suffering comrades in the ranks. We will revere and obey the city's laws, and do our best to incite a like respect and reverence in those above us who are prone to annul them or set them at naught. We will strive unceasingly to quicken the public sense of civic duty. Thus in all these ways, we will transmit this city not less but greater, better, and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us.'"

It was the Athenian boy's creed of citizenship, that Achilles' father had learned in Greece, and that Achilles' grandfather, that officer in the Greek government, had taught to them both.

The whole hall cheered him — how could they help that? And right out of the fullness of the lump in my throat, I spoke out again. And I says:

"*To-morrow! To-morrow!* You're going to give us a world, please God, where we can be true to our own nation and true to all others, for we shall all belong to the League of the World."

Oh, and they cheered that! They knew — they knew. Just like every hamlet and cross-roads in this country and in this world is getting to know — that a great new idea is waiting, for us to catch the throb of its new life. To-morrow, the League of the World is going to teach us how to be alive. If only we can make it the League of the World indeed.

Right then came beating out the first chords of the piece we were to close with. And as it was playing they brought out the great world flag that us ladies had made from the design that we had thought up and made ourselves: A white world and white stars on a blue field.

It floated over the heads of all of us that were dressed as the nations of the earth, and not one of us ladies was trying to tell which was the best one, like we had that afternoon; and that flag floated over the children, and over *To-morrow* and *Democracy* and *Liberty* and *Humanity* and *Peace* and like that. And then we sang, and the hall sang with us:

> "The crest and crowning of all good,
> Life's common goal is brotherhood."

And when the curtains swept together — the curtains made of everybody's flags — I tell you, it left

us all feeling like we ain't felt in I don't know when.

Within about a minute afterward Ruth and Ina and Irene were around me.

" Miss Calliope," they said, " the Red Cross isn't going to stop."

" No? " I said.

" We're going to start in with these foreign-born boys and girls —" Ina said.

" We're going to teach them all the things *Tomorrow* was pretending to teach them," Ruth said.

" And we're going to learn a thing or two they can teach us," I says, " beginning with Achilles."

They knew what I meant, and they nodded.

And the flag of the white world and white stars on a blue field was all ready-made to lead us — a kind of picture of God's universe.

PEACE IN FRIENDSHIP VILLAGE [1]

POST-OFFICE HALL, where the Peace celebration was to be held, was filled with flags, both bought and borrowed, and some made up by us ladies, part guessed at but most of them real accurate out of the back of the dictionary.

Two days before the celebration us ladies were all down working in the hall, and all pretty tired, so that we were liable to take exception, and object, and I don't know but what you might say contradict.

"My feet," says Mis' Toplady, "ache like the headache, and my head aches as if I'd stood on it."

"Do they?" says Mis' Postmaster Sykes, with her little society pucker. "Why, I feel just as fresh. I've got a wonderful constitution."

"Oh, anybody's constitution feels fresh if they don't work it too hard," says Mis' Holcomb-that-was-Mame-Bliss, having been down to the Hall all day long, as Mis' Sykes hadn't.

Then Mis' Toplady, that is always the one to pour oil and balm and myrrh and milk onto any troubled

1 Copyright, *Good Housekeeping*, June, 1919.

situation, she brought out her question more to reduce down the minute than anything else:

"Ladies," she says, holding up one foot to rest the aching sole of it, "Ladies, what under the sun are we going to do now that our war work's done?"

"What indeed?" says Mis' Holcomb-that-was-Mame-Bliss.

"What indeed?" says I.

"True for you," says Mis' Sykes, that always has to sound different, even though she means the same.

Of course we were all going to do what we could to help all Europe, but saving food is a kind of negative activity, and besides us ladies had always done it. Whereabouts was the novelty of that?

And we'd took over an orphan each and were going to skin it out of the egg-money and such — that is, not the orphan but its keep — and still these actions weren't quite what we meant, either.

"The mornings," says Mis' Toplady dreamy, "when I use' to wake up crazy to get through with my work and get with you ladies to sew — where's all that gone?"

"The meetings," says Mame Holcomb, "when Baptists and Catholics and young folks and Elks met promiscuous and sung and heard talking — where's them?"

And somebody brought out the thing we'd all thought most about.

"The days," she says, "when we worked next

to our old enemies — both church and family enemies — and all bad feelings forgot — where's them times?"

"What we going to do about it?" I says. "And when?"

Mis' Sykes had a suggestion. She always does have a suggestion, being she loves to have folks disciple after her. "Why, ladies," she says, "there's some talking more military preparedness right off, I hear. That means for another war. Why not us start in and knit for it *now?*" And she beamed around triumphant.

"Well," says Mame Holcomb, reasonable, "if the men are going to prepare in any way, it does seem like women had ought to be getting ready too. Why *not* knit? And have a big box all setting ready, all knit up, to match the other preparednesses?"

It was on to this peaceful assemblage that Berta, Mis' Sykes's little Switzerland maid, came rushing. And her face was pale and white. "Oh, Mis' Sykes," she says, "oh, what jew s'pose? I found a little boy setting on the front stoop."

Mis' Sykes is always calm — not so much because calm is Christian as because calm is grand lady, I always think. "On whose stoop, Berta?" she ask' her kind.

"On your own stoop, ma'am," cried Berta excitable.

"And whose little boy is it, Berta?" she ask', still more calm and kind.

"That's what I donno, ma'am," says Berta. "Nor they don't no one seem to know."

We all ask' her then, so that I don't know, I'm sure, how she managed to say a word on her own hook. It seems that she'd come around the house and see him setting there, still as a mouse. When he see her, he looked up and smiled, and got up like he'd been waiting for somebody. Berta had taken him in the kitchen.

"And he's wearing all different clothes than I ever see before in my life," said Berta, "and he don't know who he is, nor nothing. Nor he don't talk right."

Mis' Sykes got up in her grand, deliberate way. "Undoubtedly it's wandered away from its ma," says she, and goes out with the girl that was still talking excitable without getting a great deal said.

The rest of us finished setting the hall in shape. It looked real nice, with the Friendship Village booth on one side and the Foreign booth on the other. Of course the Friendship Village booth was considerably the biggest, being that was the one we knew the most about.

Then us ladies started home, and we were rounding the corner by Mis' Sykes's, when we met her a-running out.

"Ladies," she says, "if this is anybody's child that

lives in Friendship Village, I wish you'd tell me whose. Come along in."

She was awful excited, and I don't blame her. Sitting on the foot of the lounge in her dining-room was the funniest little dud ever I see. He was about four years old, and he had on a little dress that was all gold braid, and animals, and pictures, and biscuits, and shells, looked like. But his face was like any — black eyes he had, and a nice skin, and plain, brown hair, and no hat.

"For the land," we all says, "where *did* he come from?"

"Now listen at this," says Mis' Sykes, and she squatted down in front of him that was eating his cracker so pretty, and she says, "What's your name?"

It stumped him. He only stared.

Mis' Sykes rolled her eyes, and she pressed him. "Where d' you live?"

That stumped him too. He only stared on.

"What's your papa's name?"

That was a worse poser. So was everything else we asked him. Pretty soon he begun to cry, and that was a language we could all understand. But when we ask' him, frantic, what it was he wanted, he said words that sounded like soup with the alphabet stirred in.

"Heavens!" says Mis' Sykes. "He ain't English."

And that's what we all concluded. He wore what we'd never seen, he spoke what we couldn't speak, he come from nobody knew where.

But while we were a-staring at each other, the Switzerland maid come a-racing back. Seems she'd been up to the depot, a block away, and Copper, the baggageman, had noticed a queer-looking kid on the platform when some folks got off Number 16 that had gone through west an hour or so back. Copper thought the kid was with them, but he didn't notice it special. Where the folks went to, nobody knew.

"Down on the Flats somewhere, that's where its folks went," says Mis' Sykes. "Sure to. Well, then, they'll be looking for it. We must get it in the papers."

We raced around and advertised that little boy in the *Daily*. The Friendship Village *Evening Daily* goes to press almost any time, so if you happen to hit it right, you can get things in most up to seven o'clock. Quite often the *Evening Daily* comes after we're all in bed, and we get up and read it to go to sleep by. We told the sheriff, and he come up that evening and clucked at the little boy, without getting a word out of him, no more than we could. The news flew round town, and lots of folks come up to see him. It was more exciting than a night-blooming cereus night.

But not a soul come to claim him. He might have dropped down from inside the air.

"Well," says Mis' Sykes, "if some of them foreigners down on the Flats *has* lost him, it'll be us that'll have to find him. They ain't capable of nothing."

That was how Mis' Sykes, and Mis' Toplady, and Mame Holcomb and I hitched up and went down to the Flats and took the baby with us, right after breakfast next morning, to try our best to locate him.

The Flats are where the Friendship Village ex-foreigners live — ain't it scandalous the way we keep on calling ex-foreigners foreigners? And then, of course, nobody's so very foreign after you get acquainted. Americans, even, ain't so very foreign to Europeans after they get to know us, they say. I'd been down there often enough to see my washwoman, or dicker for a load of wood, or buy new garden truck, or get somebody to houseclean, but I didn't know anybody down there to visit — and none of us ladies did. The Flats were like that. The Flats didn't seem ever to count real regular in real Friendship Village doings. For instance, the town was just getting in sewerage, but it wasn't to go in down on the Flats, and nobody seemed surprised. The only share the Flats seemed to have in sewerage was to house the long, red line of bunk cars, where the men lived, drawn up on a spur of track by the gas house.

It was a heavenly day, warm and cool and bright,

with a little whiff of wind, like a sachet bag, thrown in. We had the Sykeses' surrey and old white horse, and Mis' Toplady and Mame and me squoze on the back seat so's to let Mis' Sykes, that was driving, have sitting beside her in plain sight that little boy in his blazing red dress.

We went first to see some folks named Amachi — her husband was up in the pineries, she said, and so she run their little home-made rug business. She was a wonderful, motherly soul, and she poored the little boy with her big, thick hand and listened, with her face up and her hair low in her neck like some kind of a picture with big, sad eyes. But she hadn't heard of anybody lost.

" One trouble with these folks," Mis' Sykes says as we drove away, " they never know anything but their own affairs."

Then we went to some folks named Cardell. They tended the bridge and let the gypsies camp in their pasture whenever they wanted. She was cutting the grass with a blunt pair of shears; and she had lots of flowers and vines and the nicest way of talking off the tip of her tongue. She give the little boy a cup of warm milk, but she hadn't heard anything about anybody being lost anywheres.

" Real superior for a foreigner," says Mis' Sykes, so quick after she'd clucked to her horse I was afraid Mis' Cardell heard her.

Then we saw an old lady named Marchant, that

her ancestors had settled up Friendship Village, but she was so poor now that everybody had kind of forgot about that, and some folks named Swenson that lived in the toll-gate house and had a regular hennery of homeless cats. And though they give the little boy a flower or two and left him stroke a kitty or more, they hadn't any of them either seen or heard of anybody that was out trying to locate a son.

It was just a little while after we started that Mis' Sykes had her great idea. I remember we were just coming out at Mis' Swenson's when she thought of it, and all the homeless cats were following along behind us with all their tails sticking up straight.

"Ladies," says Mis' Sykes, "why in under the canopy don't we get some work out of some of these folks for the peace meeting to-morrow night?"

"I was thinking of that," says Mame Holcomb.

"Some of them would wash the dishes and not charge anything, being it's for the peace."

"And help clean up next day," says Mis' Sykes. "That's when the backaching, feet-burning work comes in."

"Costs a sight to pay by the hour," says Mame, "and this way we could get the whole thing free, for patriotism."

"Mop the hall floor, too," says Mis' Sykes. "Land," she adds, only about half soft enough,

"look at them children! Did you ever see such skinny sights?"

Awful pindling-looking children, the Swensons were, and there were most as many of them as there were cats.

When she got to the gate, Mis' Sykes turned round in her grand-lady way, and she says, "Mis' Swenson, why don't you and your husband come up to the peace meetin' to-morrow night and help us?"

Mis' Swenson was a peaked little thing, with too much throat in length and not enough in thickness. "I never heard of it," she says.

Mis' Sykes explained in her commanding way. "Peace, you know," she says, "is to be celebrated between the different countries. And, of course, this is your country, too," Mis' Sykes assured her, "and we'd like to hev you come up and help with the dishes, or like that."

"Is it dress-up?" says Mis' Swenson, not very loud.

"My, no!" we told her, and decided to stick to the usual hooks in our closets.

"I'd like to," says Mis' Swenson, "if I can get Pete to change his clothes."

"So do," says Mis' Sykes gracious and clucked her horse along. "My goodness," she says, "what awful stuff these folks must feed their children! And how they must bungle 'em when they're sick. And they won't hardly any of 'em come to-morrow

night," she says. "You can not," she says, "get these folks to take part in nothing."

We went to twenty or thirty houses, and every one of them Mis' Sykes invited to come and help. But not one of the twenty or thirty houses had heard of any foreigner whatever having just arrived in Friendship Village, nor had ever seen or heard of that little boy before. He was awful good, the little soul, waving his hands so nice that I begun to be afraid everybody we met would claim foreign and ask for him.

By noon we begun to get pretty excited. And the sheriff, he was excited too, and he was hunting just as wild as any of us, being arrests was light. He was hanging on the canal bridge when we crossed it, going home along toward noon.

"They never had a case of lost child in Friendship Village in twenty years," he said. "I looked it up."

"Lost child nothing!" I told him. "The child ain't lost. Here he is. It's the parents," I said, "that's lost on us."

The noon whistle blew just then, and the men that were working on the sewer threw down their shovels.

"Look at their faces," says Mis' Sykes. "Did you ever see anything so terrible foreign?"

"Foreign ain't poison," says Mis' Toplady on the back seat.

"I'm going to have Silas put a button on the cellar window," says Mis' Sykes.

"Shucks, they ain't shaved, that's all," says Mis' Toplady.

Mis' Sykes leaned over to the sheriff. "You better be up around the peace celebration to-morrow night," she says. "We've been giving out invitations pretty miscellaneous, and we might need you."

"I'll drop up," says the sheriff. "But I like to watch them bunk cars pretty close, where the men live."

"Is there much lawlessness?" Mis' Sykes asks, fearful.

Mis' Toplady sings out, laughing, that there would be if she didn't get home to get Timothy's dinner, and Mis' Sykes come to herself and groaned.

"But oh, my land," she says, "we ain't found no ma nor pa for this child. What in time are we going to do? I'm too stiff," she says, "to adopt one personally."

But the little boy, he just smelled of the flowers the folks on the Flats had give him, and waved his hand to the sheriff, cute.

Late the next afternoon, us ladies that weren't tending to the supper were trying to get the Foreign booth to look like something. The Foreign booth looked kind of slimpsey. We hadn't got enough in it. We just had a few dishes that come from the old country, and a Swiss dress of Berta's mother's

and a Japanese dress, and like that. But we couldn't seem to connect up much of Europe with Friendship Village.

At five o'clock the door opened, and in walked Mis' Amachi and Mis' Swenson from the Flats, with nice black dresses on and big aprons pinned up in newspapers. Pretty soon in come old Mis' Marchant, that had rode up on a grocery delivery wagon, she said. Close behind these come some more of them we had asked. And Mis' Sykes, acting like the personal hostess to everything, took them around and showed them things, the Friendship Village booth that was loaded with stuff, and the Foreign booth that wasn't.

And Mis' Poulaki, one of the Greek women, she looked for a while and then she says, "We got two nice musics from old country."

She made her hands go like playing strings, and we made out that she meant two musical instruments.

"Good land!" says Mis' Sykes. "Post right straight home and get them. Got anything else?"

"A little boy's suit from Norway," says Mis' Swenson. "And my marriage dress."

"Get it up here!" cries Mis' Sykes. "Ladies, why do you s'pose we never thought of this before?"

There wasn't hardly one of them that couldn't think of something — a dish, or a candlestick, or

wooden shoes, or an old box, or a kerchief. Old Mis' Marchant had come wearing a shoulder shawl that come from Lombardy years back, and we jerked it off her and hung it up, hole and all.

It made quite some fun for all of us. And all the time our little strange boy was running around the floor, playing with papers, and when we weren't talking of anything else, we were talking about him.

"Say," says Mis' Sykes, that never means to say "say" but gets it said unbeknownst when excited, "I guess he's the foreignest thing we've got."

But by six o'clock she was ready to take that back, about him being the foreignest. The women from the Flats had all come back, bringing all they had, and by the time we put it up the Foreign booth looked like Europe personified. And that wasn't all. Full three quarters of the folks that we'd asked from down there had showed up, and most of them says they'd got their husbands to come too. So we held off the supper a little bit for them — a fifteen-cent supper it was, coffee and sandwiches and baked beans and doughnuts — and it was funny, when you think of it, for us to be waiting for them, for most of us had never spoken to any of these folks before. The women weren't planning to eat, they said; they'd help, but their men would buy the fifteen-cent supper, they added, proud. Isn't it kind of sad and dear and *motherly,* the way, whenever there isn't food

enough, it's always the woman who manages to go without and not let on, just exactly like her husband was her little boy?

By and by in they all come, dressed up clean but awful heavy-handed and big-footed and kind of wishing they hadn't come. But I liked to see them with our little lost red boy. They all picked him up and played with him like here was something they knew how to do.

The supper was to come first, and the peace part afterward, in some set speeches by the town orators; and we were just ready to pour out the coffee, I recollect, when the fire-bell rang. Us ladies didn't think much of that. Compared with getting supper onto the table, what was a fire? But the men all jumped up excitable, being fires are more in their line.

Then there was a scramble and rush and push outside, and the door of the hall was shoved open, and there stood a man I'd never seen before, white and shaking and shouting.

"The bunk cars!" he cried. "They're burning. Come!"

The bunk cars — the ten or twelve cars drawn up on a spur track below the gas house. . . .

All of us ran out of the hall. It didn't occur to us till afterward that of course the man at the door was calling the men from the Flats, some of whom worked on the sewer too. I don't suppose it would ever have entered his head to come up to call

us if the Flat folks hadn't been there. And it was they who rushed to the door first, and then the rest of us followed.

It was still dusk, with a smell of the ground in the air. And a little new moon was dropping down to bed. It didn't seem as if there ought to be a fire on such a night. Everything seemed too usual and casual.

But there was. When we got in sight of the gas house, we could see the red glare on the round wall. When we got nearer, we could see the raggedy flames eating up into the black air.

The men that lived in the cars were trying to scrabble out their poor belongings. They were shouting queer, throaty cries that we didn't understand, but some of the folks from the Flats were answering them. I think that it seemed queer to some of us that those men of the bunk cars should be having a fire right there in our town.

"Don't let's get too near," says somebody. "They might have small-pox or something."

It was Mis' Sykes, with Silas, her husband, and him carrying that bright red little boy. And the baby, kind of scared at all the noise and the difference, was beginning to straighten out and cry words in that heathen tongue of his.

"Mercy," says Mis' Sykes, "I can't find Berta. He's going," she says, "to yell."

Just then I saw something that excited me more

than the baby. There was one car near the middle that was burning hard when the stream of water struck it. And I saw that car had a little rag of lace curtain at its window, and a tin can with a flower in it. And when the blaze died for a minute, and the roof showed all burned, but not the lower part of the car or the steps, I saw somebody in blue overalls jump up the steps, and then an arm tearing down that rag of lace curtain and catching up the tin can.

" Well," I says pitiful, " ain't that funny? Some man down there in a bunk car, with a lace curtain and a posy."

I started down that way, and Mis' Toplady, Mis' Holcomb and the Sykeses come too, the Sykeses more to see if walking wouldn't keep the baby still. It wouldn't. That baby yelled louder than I'd ever heard one, which is saying lots but not too much.

When we all got down nearer, we came on Mis' Swenson and Mis' Amachi, counting up.

" We can take in two," says Mis' Swenson, " by four of the children sleeping on the floor that'll never wake up to know it."

" One can sleep on our lounge," says Mis' Amachi.

" We can put a couple or two in our barn," says a Flats man. " Oh, we'll find 'em room — no trouble to that."

Mis' Toplady and me looked at each other. Always before, in a Friendship Village catastrophe, her

and me had been among the planners. But here we were, it seemed, left out, and the whole thing being seen to by the Flats.

"Say," says Mis' Toplady all of a sudden, "it's a woman!"

We were down in front by now, and I saw her too. The blue overalls, as I had called them, were a blue dress. And the woman, a little dark thing with earrings, stood there with her poor, torn lace curtain and her tin can with a geranium all wilted down.

"Mercy!" says Mis' Sykes, shuddering. "A woman down here!"

But I was looking at that woman. And I saw she wasn't listening to what some of the Flat women were saying to her. She had her head up and back as if she was listening to something else. And now she began moving through the crowd, and now she began running, straight to where all of us stood and Mis' Sykes was trying to hush the crying child.

The next second Mis' Sykes was near knocked down by the wildness and the strength of that little dark thing who threw herself on her and grabbed the baby.

Speaking Greek, speaking Hebrew, and Hittite, and Amalekite, and the tongues of Babylon at the confusion and the last day — for all we knew, these were what that woman was speaking. We couldn't make more head nor tail out of what she was saying than we had of the baby. But we could under-

stand without understanding. It was in her throat, it was in her tears, it was in her heart. She cried, she sunk down to the ground, kissing that baby. He put out his hands and went right to her, laughing in the midst of the crying — oh, I've heard a baby laugh in its tears when it saw its mother, but this one was the best. And he snuggled up close, while she poured all over him them barbarous accents. But he knew what she said, and he said them back. Like before our eyes the alphabet of vermicelli had begun spelling words.

Then a man come running — I can see now that open collar, that face covered with stubble, those great eyes under their mass of tangled hair, the huge, rough hands that he laid about the baby's shoulders. And they both began talking to us, first one and then both, asking, looking, waiting for us to reply. Nobody replied. We all looked to Mis' Sykes to see what she could think of, as we always do in a village emergency.

But it wasn't Mis' Sykes that could help us now. It was the Flat folks. It was them that could understand. Half a dozen of them began telling us what it was they said. It seemed so wonderful to see the folks that we had never paid attention to, or thought they knew anything, take those tangled sounds and unravel them for us, easy, into regular, right-down words.

It seems the family had got to Friendship Village

night before last, him to work on the sewer and his wife to cook for the men in the bunk cars. There were five other little folks with them — sure enough, there they were now, all flocking about her — and the oldest girl had somehow lost the baby. Poor souls, they had tried to ask. But he knew that he must dig and she must cook, and there was not much time for asking, and eight weeks in this country was all that they had and hardly three words of English. As for asking the law, they knew the law only as something that arrests you.

We were all there in a bunch by that time, everybody making signs to everybody, whether anybody could understand or not. There was something about those two, with our little chap in the midst of them, that sort of loosened us all up. We all of us understood so thorough that we pretty near forgot the fire.

By then it had most died down anyhow, and somebody started to move back up-town.

"The hall, the hall!" says Mis' Toplady to us. "Have 'em all go up to the Post-office Hall. Spread it, spread it!"

We did spread it, to go up there and see what we could do for the burned-out folks, and incidentally finish the peace celebration.

Up there in Post-office Hall the lights were all on, just as we'd left them, and there was kind of a cozy feel of supper in the air.

"Look here," says Mis' Toplady, "there's quarts of coffee hot on the back of the stove and a whole mountain of sandwiches —"

"Let's," I says. And we all begun to do so.

We all begun to do so, and I begun to do something more. I'd learned quite a little from seeing them there in the hall and kitchen that afternoon, the Swensons and Poulakis and Amachis and the rest. And now here were these others, from the bunk cars,— big, beautiful eyes they had, and patient looks, and little bobbing curtsies, and white teeth when they smiled. I saw them now, trying to eat and behave the best they knew how, and back of them the Foreign booth, under the Foreign flag. And what I begun to have to do, was to get in over behind that Foreign Booth and wipe up my eyes a little.

Once I peeked out. And I happened to see the sheriff going by. He was needed, like Mis' Sykes told him he might be, but not the same, either. He was passing the sugar and cream.

What brought me out finally was what I heard Mis' Sykes saying:

"Ladies," says she, "let's us set her up there in the middle of the Foreign Booth, with her little boy in her lap. That'll be just the finishing foreign touch," says she, "to our booth."

So we covered a chair with foreign flags, promis-

cuous, and set her there. Awful pretty and serious she looked.

"If only we could talk to her," says Mis' Sykes, grieving. "Ladies, any of you know any foreign sentences?"

All any of us could get together was terra cotton and delirium tremens. So we left it go, and just stood and looked at her, and smiled at her, and clucked at the little boy, and at all her little folks that come around her in the booth, under the different flags.

"We'll call her Democracy!" says Mame Holcomb, that often blazes up before the match is lit. "Why not call her the Spirit of Democracy, in the newspaper write-up?"

With that Mis' Sykes kind of stopped winking and breathing, in a way she has.

"My land," she says, "but *s'pose he's an enemy baby and she's his enemy ma?*"

There hadn't one of us thought of that. For all we had made out, they might be anything. We got hold of Mis' Poulaki and Mis' Amachi, hot foot.

"Ast her what she is," we told them. "Ast her what country it is she comes from."

"Oh," says Mis' Poulaki, "that we know already. They're Lithuanians — that is what they are."

Lithuanians. Where was it? Us ladies drew to-

gether still more close. Was Lithuanians central power or was it ally? Us ladies ain't so very geographical, and not one of us knew or could make out.

"Say," says Mis' Toplady finally, "shut up, all of us. If it gets around for folks to wonder at — Why, my land," she says, "their bunk car's burned up anyhow, ain't it? Let's us shut up."

And so we done. And everybody was up around the Foreign Booth. And the Friendship Village booth was most forgot.

All of a sudden, somebody started up "America." I don't know where they'd learned it. There aren't so very many chances for such as these to learn it very good. Some of them couldn't say a word of it, but they could all keep in tune. I saw the side faces of the Flats folks and the bunk car folks, while they hummed away, broken, at that tune that they knew about. Oh, if you want to know what to do next with your life, go somewhere and look at a foreigner in this country singing "America," when he doesn't know you're looking. I don't see how we rest till we get our land a little more like what he thinks it is. And while I was listening, it seemed as if Europe was there in the room.

It was while they were singing that the magic began to work in us all. I remember how it started.

"Oh," says Mis' Toplady, "ladies! Think of

that little boy, and the other folks, living in those bunk cars. Don't it seem as if, while they're here, us ladies could —"

" Don't it? " I says.

" And the little skinny ones down on the Flats," Mis' Toplady whispers pretty soon. " Can't some of us teach them women how to feed them better and cost no more? "

" And take care of them when they're sick," says Mame Holcomb. " I shouldn't wonder if they die when they don't need to, all day long."

We see ideas gathering back of one another's eyes. And all of a sudden I thought of something else. " Ladies," I says, " and get sewerage down there on the Flats! Don't it belong there just exactly as much as in the residence part? "

Us ladies all looked at each other. We'd just taken it for granted the Flats shouldn't have sewerage and should have the skeptic tank.

" Say," says Mis' Toplady, " it don't look to me like we'd have a very hard time knowing what to do with ourselves, now this war is over."

" The mornings," says Mame Holcomb, " when we use' to wake up, crazy to start in on something — it looks to me like they ain't all through with yet! "

" The meetings," says Mis' Toplady, " when Baptists and Catholics and Elks —"

Mis' Sykes was listening. It ain't very often that

she comes down off her high horse, but when she does, I tell you she lands hard.

"Ladies!" she says. "It was me that was talking about beginning to knit for another war. Why didn't you shut me up and bolt the door?"

THE STORY OF JEFFRO [1]

When I have told this story of Jeffro, the alien, some one has always said:

"Yes, but there's another side to that. They aren't all Jeffros."

When stories are told of American gentleness, childlike faith, sensitiveness to duty, love of freedom, I do not remember to have heard any one rejoin:

"Yes, but Americans are not all like that."

So I wonder why this comment should be made about Jeffro.

I

WHEN Jeffro first came knocking at my door that Spring morning, he said that which surprised me more than anything that had been said to me in years. He said:

"Madam, if you have a house for rent — a house for rent. Have you?"

For years nobody had said that to me; and the little house which I own on the Red Barns road, not far from the schoolhouse, was falling in pieces because I never could get enough ahead to mend it

1 Copyright, *Everybody's Magazine*, 1915.

up. In the road in front of it there was a big hole that had never been filled in. And the house only had two rooms anyway — and a piece of ground about as big as a rug; and the house was pretty near as old as the ground was.

"Land," I says, "man, you don't want to rent that house?"

He smiled, nice and wrinkled and gentle, and said yes, he did; and nothing that I, as my own real estate agent, could say discouraged him. Even when I'd whipped off my kitchen apron and found the key to the little house in my button-box, and had gone down the road with him to look the house over, and let him see what it was like, he insisted that he wanted to rent it. And so in the end he done: at four dollars a month, which wasn't much more than, by rights, the sale price should have been.

"I do little things to this house," said Jeffro. "I make little change for good. I have some handy with a hammer."

I remember turning back a ways from the house, and seeing him standing there, with his hands behind him, looking at the house as if it *was* something, and something of his.

When I got home and was up in the garret hunting up the three green paper shades for his windows, it come to me that I hadn't asked him for any references, and that for all I knew he might be going to counterfeit money or whisky or something there

on the premises. But anybody'd known better than that just to look at Jeffro's face. A wonderful surprised face he had; surprised, but believing it all too, and trusting the good. A brown face, with big, brown eyes, and that wrinkled smile of his. I like to think about him.

After a few days I went over with the shades, and he'd got a few pieces of furniture there, setting round, loose and unattached. And on a big basket of stuff was sitting a little boy, about eight years old.

"That's Joseph," says Jeffro, simple. "We are the two that came."

Then he told me. In "the old country" his wife and two little ones were waiting till he could earn money to send back for them.

"I thought when I had thes' little follow here," he said, "I could work then more easy. He don't eat but little," he added.

"But how," says I, "are you expecting to earn all that money out of Friendship Village — where folks saves for years to put on a new stoop?"

At this he smiled, sort of knowing. And he pointed to a poster over his wood-box. It was printed in Yiddish, all but the words "United States"; but the picture — that was plain enough. It showed a mill on one side of the street, and a bank on the other. And from the mill a stream of workingmen, with bags of money on their backs, were streaming over toward the bank.

"That was put up on my cow-shed at home," said Jeffro. "I have brought it. But I have no trade — I can not earn money fast like those. I make the toys."

He threw open the door into the only other room of the house. In it was piled dozens of boxes, and some broad shelves to be put up, and a table was covered with colored stuff. "Then I go up to the city and sell," said he. "It is only five miles. But I can not live there — not with thes' boy. I say, 'I vill find some little cheap place out in the country for us two.' So then I come here. I am now in America five weeks," he added, proud.

"Five weeks!" says I. "Then where'd you learn to talk American?"

"I have study and save' for six-seven years, to be ready," said Jeffro, simple. "Now I come. Next year I think I send for them."

All day long those words of his kept coming and ringing in my ears. And it kind of seemed to me that in them was a great chorus — a chorus of thousands going up that minute, and this minute, and all the time, all over America:

"Now I come. Next year I think I send for them."

And I says to myself: "What's America going to do for him? What's America going to do to him? What are we going to do to him? And what is he going to do for us?"

Well, the story of the first few weeks of Jeffro's in Friendship Village is for me a kind of window set in the side-wall of the way things are.

One morning, a little before nine o'clock, I had to go to the schoolhouse to see Miss Mayhew. When I went by Jeffro's I didn't see anything of him, but when I got along by the schoolhouse grounds, there I saw him, leaning on the fence under the locust-tree.

"Good morning, Mr. Jeffro," I says. "Do the children bother you down to your house with their noise? That's one reason my house used to be so hard to rent, it was so close by the schoolhouse."

His face, when he turned to me, startled me.

"Bother me!" he said, slow. "Every day I come across to look at them near. To see them — it is a vonder. Thes' big building, thes' big yard, thes' children that do no vork, only learn, learn. And see — Joseph is there. Over by the swing — you see him? He learn, too — my Joseph — I do not even buy his books. It is free — all free. I am always vatching them in thes' place. It is a vonder."

Then one night, when he had been there about two weeks, Jeffro's house caught fire. A candle that he used for melting his wax tipped over on his toy shavings and blazed up. Timothy Toplady, driving by, heard him shout, and galloped into town for the department, and they went tearing out Red Barns

way soon after Jeffro had the fire put out. He was making toys again when the fire-engine drew up at his gate, and the men came trampling up to his porch, wanting the blaze pointed out to them. Bud Miles, that's in the department, told me how Jeffro stood in the door bowing to them and regretting the trouble he'd made, and apologizing to them for not having any fire ready for them to put out.

And the next day Jeffro walked into the engine house and asked the men sitting round with their heels up how much he owed them.

"For what?" says they.

"For putting down my fire," Jeffro says. "That is, for coming to put it down if I had one."

The men stared at him and burst out laughing. "Why nothing," they said. "That don't cost anything. That's free."

Jeffro just stood and looked at them. "Free?" he said. "But the big engine and the wagons and the men and the horses —does nobody pay them to come and put down fires?"

"Why, the town does," they told him. "The town pays them."

He said eagerly: "No, no — you have not understood. I pay no taxes — I do not help that way with taxes. Then I must pay instead — no?"

They could hardly make him understand. All these big things put at his service, even the town fire-bell rung, and nothing to pay for it. His experience

with cities was slight, in any case. He went off, looking all dazed, and left the men shouting. It seemed such a joke to the men that it shouldn't be all free. It seemed so wonderful to Jeffro that it should.

He hadn't gone half a block from the engine-house when he turned round and went back.

"The gentlemen have not understood," he said. "I am not yet a citizen. I have apply for my first papers, but I am not yet a citizen. Whoever is not citizen must pay for this fire attention. Is it not so?"

Then they shouted again. Think of stopping to find out whether a man was a citizen before they put his fire out! Everybody in Friendship Village was telling that to each other for weeks, and splitting their sides over it.

Less than a couple of weeks afterward Jeffro got a letter from home, from his wife. Postmaster Silas Sykes handed it out to him when Jeffro come in the post-office store for some groceries, and when he started to pay for the groceries Jeffro says:

"How much on the letter?"

"Why, they's nothing due on that," says Silas, squinting at it over the sugar-barrel.

"But thes' is only old country stamp on here," said Jeffro. "It is not enough for all this way in America too?"

Silas waved his hand at him like the representa-

tive of the gover'ment he was. "Your Uncle Sam pays for all that," says he.

Jeffro looks at him a minute, then he says: "Uncle Sam — is that, then, a person? I see the pictures —"

"Sure, sure," says Silas, winking to Timothy Toplady that stood by. "Uncle Sam takes grand care of us, you bet."

"I am not yet a citizen," Jeffro insisted. "I have apply for my first papers —"

"Go 'long," says Silas, magnificent. "Do you s'pose Uncle Sam bothers himself about that? You belong to his family as soon as you strike shore."

Timothy Toplady told me about it. "And," says he, "do you know that man went out of the store looking perfectly queer! And kind of solemn."

All these things begun to open my eyes. Here, all my life, I'd been taking things for granted. My school-days, the fire-engine, postage-stamps, and all the rest, I'd took for granted, just like this generation is taking for granted aëroplanes. And all of a sudden now, I see how they were: not gifts to me, but powers of the big land. I'd always thought of a village as a person. But a Big Land — that had powers too! And was developing more as fast as its folks would let it.

And it was wonderful consoling. It helped me over more than I can tell. When Silas Sykes give light measure on my sugar and oatmeal, thinks I:

" Well, you're just a little piece of the Big Land's power of business — and it ain't grown yet. It's only just growing."

And when the Friendship Village Married Ladies' Cemetery Improvement Sodality — that's just the name of it and it works at more things than just cemetery — when it had spent five years studying our gover'ment, and then turned around and created an executive board whose reports to the Society of Forty had to be made unanimous — I says to myself:

" Well, the club's just a little piece of the Big Land's power of democracy, and it ain't grown yet. It's only just growing."

And when the Friendship Village chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution refused to leave us ladies borrow their copy of the American flag because they reverenced it so hard they were afraid it would get tore, I says to myself:

" But it's just a little scrap of the Big Land's power of patriotism to the universe, and it ain't grown yet only just to one country — and not entirely to that."

And it made me see things intimate and tender. And it was Jeffro that did that for me.

That summer he come to kind of belong to the town, the way a hill or a tree does, only lots more so. At first, folks used to call him " that Jew peddler," and circus day I heard Mis' Sykes saying we better lock up our doors during the parade, because we

didn't know what " that foreigner " might take it in his head to do.

" Mis' Sykes," says I, " where were your mother and father born? "

" New York state," says she, like the right answer.

" And their folks? " I went on.

" Massachusetts," says she, like she was going to the head now sure.

" And *their* folks? " I continued, smooth. " Where'd *they* come from? "

Mis' Sykes began to wobble. " Well," says she, " there was three brothers come over together —"

" Yes," I says, " I know. There always is. Well, where'd they come from? And where'd their folks come from? Were they immigrants to America, too? Or did they just stay foreigners in England or Germany or Scandinavia or Russia, maybe? " says I. " Which was it? "

Mis' Sykes put on her most ancestral look. " You can ask the most personal questions, Calliope," she began.

" Personal," says I. " Why, I dunno. I thought that question was real universal. For all we know, it takes in a dozen nations with their blood flowing, sociable, in with yours. It's awful hard for any of us," I says, " to find a real race to be foreign to. I wouldn't bet I was foreign to no one," says I, " nor that no one was foreign, for certain, to me."

"I shall lock my door circus day, just the same," says Mis' Sykes.

"Do," says I. "Circuses is likely to be followed up by hoodlums. And I've known them to be native-born, now and again."

But after a while, in spite of his being a foreigner, most everybody got to like Jeffro. You couldn't help it — he was so patient and ready to believe. And the children — the children that like your heart — they all loved him. They would follow him along the curb, and he'd set down and show them his pack — time and again I've come on him in a shady side-street opening his pack for them. And sometimes when he had a new toy made, he'd walk up to the schoolhouse a-purpose to show it to them, and they'd all crowd round him, at recess.

On account of that, the children's folks took to noticing him and speaking to him. And folks done little things for him and for Joseph. Abigail Arnold, that keeps the home bakery, she had him make a wooden bridal pair for the top of the wedding-cake she keeps permanent in her show window; Mis' Timothy Toplady had him do little odd jobs around their place, and she'd pay him with a cooked chicken. He'd show most all of us the picture of his little young wife and the two children —

"I declare," says Mis' Toplady, kind of wondering, "since I've seen the picture of his wife and

babies he don't seem to me much more foreign than anybody else."

I happened over to Jeffro's one morning with a loaf of my brown bread and a half a johnny-cake. He seemed to know how to cook pretty well, but still I felt more or less sorry for him and the little boy, and I used to take them in a thing or two less than half occasionally. When I stepped up to the door that night I heard him singing — he used to sing low, funny songs while he worked. And when he opened the door for me, all of a sudden he blushed to the top of his face. And he bowed his funny, stiff way, and says:

"Vell, I see I blush like boys. It is because I was singing a little — vat-you-call, lull'by. Ven I make the toys I am always thinking how little children vill go to sleep holding vat I make, and sometimes I put in lull'bies, in case there is no mother to sing them."

That was like Jeffro. I mention it because Jeffro was just like that.

I'd set down the bread and the johnny-cake, and he'd thanked me — Jeffro always thanked folks like he'd just been give a piece of new life with every kindness — and I dunno but he had — I dunno but we all have; and I'd started to go, when he says hesitating:

"I have vanted to ask you thes': If I vork at that bad place in the road in front — if I bring sand

from the hill behind, what I can, and fill in that hole, slow, you know — but some every day — you would not mind? "

"Mind?" says I. "Why, my, no. But it's part the village's business to do that. You're in the village limits, you know. It'd ought to been done long ago."

"The village?" said he. "But it is your place. Why should the village fix that hole?"

"It's the village's business," I told him, "to keep the streets good. Most of them do it pretty lackadaisical, but it's their business to do it."

His face lit up like turning up the wick. *"Nu!"* he cried. "So I vill do. I thought it vould be you I am doing it for, and I vas glad. But if it is the village, then I am many times more glad of that."

It wasn't much of a compliment to a lady, but I thought I see what he meant.

"Why are you glad, Mr. Jeffro," I says, to make sure, "that it's the village?"

"It does all the things for me," he says, simple. "The fire-engine, the post-office — even the telephone is free to me in the village. So it is America doing this for me; for thes' village, it belongs to America. There is no army that I go in or pay to keep out of — there are no soldiers that are jostling me in the streets — they do not even make me buy and put up any flag. And my little Joseph, all day

long he is learning. And the people — here they call me 'Mr.' All is free — free. For all thes' I pay nothing. And now you tell me here is a hole that it is the village business to fill up. It is the business of America to fill up that hole! Vell, I can make that my business, for a little — what-you-say — *pay-back.*"

It was awful hard to know what to say. I wonder what you'd have said? I just stood still and kept still. Because, if I'd known what to say, it would have been pretty hard, just then, to say it anyway.

"It is a luck for the folks," he said, "that their own vork lets them make some paying back. My toys, they don't pay back, not very much. I must find another vay."

He followed me out on the stoop.

"There is von thing they vill let me do after a vile, though," he said, with a smile. "In America, I hear everybody make von long, strong groaning about their taxes. Those taxes, ven vill they come? And are they so very big, then? They must be very big to pay for all the free things."

"Why, Mr. Jeffro," I said, "but you won't have any taxes."

"But I am to be a citizen!" he cried. "Every citizen pays his taxes."

"No," I told him. "No, they don't. And unless you own property or — or something," says I,

stumbling as delicate as I could, " you don't pay any taxes at all, Mr. Jeffro."

When I made him know that sure, he lifted his arms and let them drop; and he come on down the path with me, and he stood there by the syringa bush at the gate, looking off down the little swelling hill to where the village nestled at the foot. School was just out, and the children were flooding down the road, and the whole time was peaceful and spacious and close-up-to, like a friend. We stood still for a minute, while I was thinking that; and when I turned to Jeffro, he stood with the tears running down his cheeks.

" To think there is such a place," he said reverently. " And me in it. And them going to be here." Then he looked at me like he was seeing more than his words were saying. " I keep thinking," he said, " how hard God is vorking, all over the earth — and how good He's succeeded here."

Up to the gate run little Joseph, his school-books in his arms. Jeffro put both hands on the boy.

" Little citizen, little citizen," his father said. And it was like one way of being baptized.

II

When I was a little girl, a cardinal bird came one summer and nested in our yard. They almost never come so far north, and I loved him like a friend. When autumn came, the other birds all went, but he

didn't go. And one day, in the first snow and high wind, he was storm-beaten into our little porch, and we caught him. We dare not let him go, in the cold. So we kept him until he died. I shall never forget the change that the days made. I cannot bear to tell or to think about the change in him that the days made. That is why I will never have about me a caged thing, bird or beast or spirit. The cardinal helped me to understand. I wonder if the death of any beauty or any life is as much Nature's will as we still think it is. . . .

This is why I shrink from telling what next happened to Jeffro — what I knew must happen to him if he came here and lived the life of his kind — of my kind. Lived it, I mean, with his eyes open. There are plenty who live it and never know anything about it, after all. But Jeffro would know. He had seeing eyes, and his heart was the heart of a child, and his face was always surprised — surprised, but believing it all too, and trusting the good. He trusted the good just as you and I did, in the beginning. Just as you and I do, in the end. But in between the two trusts there comes a black time; and if it hasn't come to you, then you don't know the Big Land; and you don't see what's going on in it; and you haven't questioned where it's all going to lead. As, after a while, Jeffro questioned it.

All summer he worked at his toys, and all the autumn. But when winter began to come, the little

house was hard to heat. The roof was decayed, the windows were shrunken, the floor was in a draft from all four directions; and I didn't have the money to make the house over — which was just about what it needed. I offered to rent him and the little boy a room in my house, and to let him do his work there; but it was far for the little fellow to go to school. And just then came the Offer.

A man from a mining town in the next state gave Jeffro a chance to go there with him, and he'd give him work in the mines all winter. Jeffro listened, and heard about the good pay, and the plain, hearty food, and the chance to get ahead; and Miss Mayhew said she'd keep the little boy; and Jeffro thought about the cold little house, and feeding himself all winter, and about standing on street corners with his pack; and there was Miss Mayhew's nice, warm house and woman-care for the little boy. And in the end Jeffro went. I told him to leave his things in the little house and I wouldn't charge him rent, which it wasn't worth it.

The night before he started he come round to my house to say good-by. He thanked me, so nice, for what I'd done, off and on. And then he pulled something out of his pocket.

"Look!" he said. "It is from the National Bank. It is my bank-book — the proofs that I have money there. Here is my checker book," said he. "You know how these things go. See that!" His

eyes got big and deep. "They give me credit — and thes' two books," he said. "And they vill give me interest on thes' little money. It vill make money for me vile I am gone. It is a vonder. I ask' them vat there is to pay for this chance, and the man laughed. And see — all the vile I am gone, Joseph vill be learning free. I pay no more than his little board. It is a vonder."

He showed me the entry, thirty-seven dollars, his summer's savings. He had had to keep back the amount of his fare.

"The ticket is much," he said, "but thes' vay I can save enough by spring so they can come. They can live in your little house — oh, it is a plenty room. Ve shall have a little garden — as big as Joseph's plate! She vill keep a little coop of chickens —"

So he ran on with his happy planning. I remember how he looked when he left my house that night — his two books tightly clasped, his shoulders back, his head full of dreams, his face sort of held up to the stars. I never saw him that way again.

It was a long winter. It's strange how the calendar sets down winter as just being three months when everybody that's lived through one knows how it's either long or short and never, never clipped right off at the three months, same as the almanac would have you believe. This one was long, and it was white, and it was deep. It kept me shoveling coal and splitting kindling and paying for stove-wood

and warming my feet, and it seemed to me that was pretty near all I did do those months. It's surprising and it's discouraging how much of our lives goes along just doing the little fussy things necessary to keep a-going, that you can't count in on just pure, sheer living.

"Eight hours for work, eight hours for sleep, and eight hours for exercise," they used to tell me; and I used to think: "Yes, but what about just messing-round?" That don't get itself counted in at all, and that just eats up time by the dialful. And I think, if you look close, that one of the things we've got to learn is how to do less of the little hectoring, wearing messing-round, and to do more of the big, plain, real, true, unvarnished living — like real work, and real play, and real talk, and real thinking. And fewer little jobs — fewer little jobs.

But after a while the winter got done, and early April came — a little faint green down below, a little fine gold up above, and a great wide wash of pale blue at the top; Spring in three layers.

I'd been often to see Joseph, and he was well, and in the reader ahead of the reader a boy of his age would naturally have been in. He had had several short letters from his father, and I was looking to have one of them say when we might expect him, but none of them did.

Then in April no letter came. We thought it

meant that he'd be home. I'd been over and cleaned the little house. And then when April was almost to a close, and he hadn't come yet, I saw it would be too late for his garden, so I planted that — a few vegetables, and a few flowers, and a morning-glory or two over the stoop. And I laid in a few canned things in his cupboard, so's he would have something to start in on.

May came, and we wondered. Then one day there was a letter in a strange writing. Jeffro was in the hospital, it said, and he wanted to send word that he was all right and would send a letter himself in a little while. That was all that it told us.

Everybody in Friendship Village remembers that spring, because it was the year the bank closed down. Nobody knew the reason. Some day, when the world gets really to going, one of the things they'll read about in musty books and marvel over will be the things we call panics. They'll know then that, put simple, it's just another name for somebody's greed, dressed up becoming as Conditions. We're beginning now to look at the quality of the clothes Conditions dress in, and we're finding them pretty poor quality sometimes, and cut awful old-fashioned, and the dye rubs off. But in those days, all we knew was that the bank had " suspended payment."

" But what's that mean —' suspended payment? ' " I says to Silas Sykes that told me. " You can't suspend your debts, can you? I never could."

"It means," Silas says, "that they'll never pay a cent on the dollar. That's what it means."

"But," I says, "I don't understand. If I owe you ten dollars, I can't put down my curtain and suspend *that* payment, *can* I?"

"Well, you ain't banks," says Silas. "And banks is."

I was walking away and thinking it over, when I stopped stock-still in the street. The National Bank — it was the National Bank that Jeffro had his thirty-seven dollars in.

I felt as if I had to do something for him, then and there. And that afternoon I took my trowel and went up to his little place, and thought I'd dig round some in the garden that was coming up, gay as a button.

When I stepped inside the gate, I looked up at the house, and I saw the front door was open. "Land," I thought, "I hope they haven't stole what little he had in there, too." And I stepped up to the door.

In the wooden chair in the middle of the floor sat Jeffro. His hat was pulled down over his eyes, his legs were thrust out in front of him, one of his arms was hanging down, and the other one was in a white sling.

"Mr. Jeffro — Mr. Jeffro!" I says. "Oh — what's the matter?"

He looked up, and his face never changed at sight

of me, nor he never got up or moved. And his look — well, it wasn't the look of Jeffro any more than feathers have the look of a bird. But one thing I knew about that look — he was hungry. I could tell that look anywhere, because I've been hungry myself, with no food coming from anywheres.

I flew to the cupboard where I'd put in the few things, and in a jiffy I had some soup heating and a box of crackers opened. I brought the bowl to the table, all steaming and good-smelling, and he drew up there without a word and ate with his hat on — ate like I never saw a man eat before.

When he got through: "Tell me about it, Mr. Jeffro," I says. And he told me.

It wasn't anything very new. Jeffro had been in the mines since the first of November, and the first of January the strike had begun — the strike against a situation that Jeffro drew for me that afternoon, telling it without any particular heat, but just plain and quiet. He told me how he had gone with some of the men to the house of one of the owners to talk of settlement.

"I spoke out to him once," said Jeffro. "I said: 'Will *you* tell me how this is? They can not make me understand. America gives me free all the things that I did not expect: The fire-engine, it takes no pay. My little boy's school costs me not anything. When I come to this state I have no passport to get, and they did not search me at the frontier. All this

is very free. But when we want more bread, and we are willing to work for it all day long with our hands, you will not let us have more, even then. Even when we pay with work. Will you tell me how this is?' "

Of all that the man had said to him, kindly enough, Jeffro understood nothing. And he could speak the language, while many of the men in the mines could not say one word of English.

" But they could strike in Russian and Polish and Lithuanian," Jeffro said, " and they did."

Then came the soldiers. Jeffro told me about that.

" Ve vere standing there outside the Angel mine," he said, " to see that nobody vent to vork and spoiled our hopes, ven somebody cried out: 'The soldiers!' Many of the men ran — I did not know vy. Here was some of the United States army. I had never seen any of the army before. I hurried toward them, my cap in my hand. I saw their fine uniforms, their fine horses, this army that was kept to protect me, a citizen, and vich I did not have to pay. I stood bowing. My heart felt good. They had come to help us then — free! And then somebody cried. 'He's one of the damned, disorderly picketers. Arrest him!' And they did; and nothing I could say vould make them understand. I vas in jail four days, but all those days I thought it vas a mistake. I smiled to think how sorry they vould be

ven they found out they had arrested von they were paid to protect — free."

He told me how there went on the days, the weeks, of the strike; hunger, cold; the militia everywhere. The little that Jeffro had earned was spent, dime by dime. He stayed on, hoping for the settlement, certain that it would all be right as soon as everybody "understood."

"It vas this vay," he said laboriously. "Mine-owners and money and militia vere here. Over here vere the men. Vrong vas done on both sides — different kinds of vrong. The sides could not speak together clear. No von understood no von."

Then a miner had resisted an officer who tried to arrest him, the officer fired, and Jeffro had the bullet in his shoulder, and had been locked up for being "implicated"—"I don't know yet vat they mean by that long vord," Jeffro said — and had been taken to the courthouse and later to the hospital. On his discharge, eight days ago, he had started to walk home to Friendship Village.

"To-morrow," Jeffro said, "I vill get out from the bank my money — I have not touched that — and send to her vat I have. It may be she has saved a little bit. Somehow she vill come. To-morrow I vill get it, as soon as the bank is open."

I knew I had to tell him — I knew I had to tell him right then. "Mr. Jeffro — Mr. Jeffro," I said,

"you can't. You can't get your money. The bank's failed."

He looked at me, not understanding.

"Vat is that?" he said. "'Failed'— for a bank?"

"I don't know what it is," I told him. "It's something banks can do. You never can tell when. And this one has done it."

"But," he cried, "vat do you mean? It vas the *National* Bank! This nation can not fail!"

"This much of it has," I says. "The bank's shut up tight. Everybody that had money in it has lost it — unless maybe they pay back to each one just a little bit."

He stood up then and looked at me as if I were strange. "Then this too," he says, "can happen in America. And the things I see all winter — the soldiers to shoot you down?"

"No, no," I says. "You mustn't think —"

"I do not think," says Jeffro. "I know. I have seen. I am there ven it happens. And more that I did not tell. In March a man came to me ven I was hungry, and tried to buy my vote. Ven I understood, I struck him in his face, just the same as if I have von. But I saw men sell their vote, and laugh at it. And now I understand. You throw dust in our eyes, free fire-engines, free letter-carriers, free this and free that, and all the time somebody

must be laughing somewhere at how it makes us fools. I hate America. Being free here, it is a lie!"

And me, I set still, trying to think. I set looking at the bright-colored poster that Jeffro had found on his cow-shed in the old country, and I was trying to think. I knew that a great deal of what he'd said was true. I knew that folks all over the country were waking up and getting to know that it was true. And yet I knew that it wasn't all the truth. That there was more, and that something had got to make him know. But what was going to do that?

Faint and high and quite a ways off, I heard a little call. It wasn't much of a call, but when another came and then another, it set my heart to beating and the blood to rushing through me as though it was trying to tell me something.

I stood up and looked. And up the street I saw them — running and jumping, shouting little songs and laughing all the way — the children, coming out of the Friendship Village schoolhouse, there at the top of the hill. And in a minute it came over me that even if I couldn't help him, there was something to do that mebbe might comfort him some, just now, when he was needing it.

I stepped to the door, and up by the locust-tree I see Joseph coming. I could pick out his little black head and his bobbed hair and his red cheeks. And I called to him.

"Joseph, Joseph!" I says. "You come over here — and have the rest come too!"

He came running, his eyes beginning to shine. And the others came running and followed him, eager to know what was what. And up the road a piece I see some more coming, and they all begun to run too.

Joseph ran in the gate ahead of everybody, and past me, and in at the door that was close to the road. And he threw away his book, and ran to his father, and flung both arms around his neck. And the rest all came pressing up around the door, and when they see inside, they set up a shout:

"It's the Present-man! It's the Present-man! He's back a'ready!"

Because I guess 'most every one of them there had had something or other of Jeffro's making for Christmas. But I'd never known till that minute, and neither had he, that they'd ever called him that. When he heard it, he looked up from Joseph, where he stood holding him in his arms almost fierce, and he come over to the door. And the children pressed up close to the door, shouting like children will, and the nearest ones shook his hand over Joseph's shoulder.

And me, all of a sudden I shouted louder'n they did: "Who you glad to see come home?"

And they all shouted together, loud as their lungs: *"The Present-man! The Present-man!"*

And then they caught sight of Miss Mayhew, coming from the school, and they all ran for her, to tell her the news. And she came in the gate to shake hands with him. And then in a minute they all trooped off down the road together, around Miss Mayhew, one or two of them waving back at him.

Then I turned round and looked at Jeffro.

"Why, they have felt — felt glad to see me!" he says, breathless. And back to his face came creeping some of the old Jeffro look.

"Why, they are glad," says I. "We all are. We've missed you like everything — trudging along with your toys."

Joseph wasn't saying a word. He was just snuggling up, nosing his father's elbow, like a young puppy. Jeffro stood patting him with his cracked, chapped hand. And Jeffro was looking down the road, far as he could watch, after the children.

"I've got a little canned stuff there in the cupboard for your suppers," I says, not knowing what else to say. "And I stuck a few things in the ground for you out there, that are coming up real nice — potatoes and onions and a cabbage or two. And they's a little patch of corn that'll be along by and by."

All of a sudden Jeffro turned his back to me and walked a few steps away. "A garden?" he says, not looking round. "A little garden?"

"Kind of a one," I told him. "Such as it is, it's

all right — what there is of it. And Abigail Arnold," I says, "wants you should make her another wooden bridal pair for the cake in the window — the groom to the other one is all specked up. And I heard her say you could set some of your toys there in her front case. Oh yes, and Mis' Timothy Toplady's got a clucking hen she's been trying to hold back for you, and she says you can pay her in eggs —"

I stopped, because Jeffro frightened me. He wheeled round and stood looking out the door across the pasture opposite, and his lips were moving. I thought maybe he was figuring something with them, and I kept still. But he wasn't — he was thinking with them. In a minute he straightened up. And his face — it wasn't brave or confident the way it had been once, but it was saying a thing for him — a nice thing, even before he spoke.

He came and put out his hand to me, round Joseph. "My friend," he says, "I vill tell you what it is. Thes' is what I thought America was like."

Wasn't that queer, when I understood all he had hoped from America, and all he hadn't found? A lump come in my throat — not a sad one though! But a glad one. And oh, the difference in them lumps!

He went back to work at his toys again, and he began at the bottom, a whole year after his first com-

ing, to save up money to bring over his wife and the little ones. And it wasn't two weeks later that I went there one night and saw him out working on the hole in the road again.

"I work for you this time, though," he said, when he see I noticed. "Thes' I do not for America — no! I do it for you and for thes' village. No one else."

And I thought, while I watched him pounding away at the dirt:

"Anybody might think Friendship Village knows things America hasn't found out yet — but of course that can't be so."

WHEN NICK NORDMAN CAME BACK HOME

I WAS awful nervous about going up to meet Nick Nordman. It had been near thirty years since I'd seen him, and he'd got so rich that one house and one automobile weren't anything. He had about three of each, and he frisked the world in between occupying them. Still, when he wrote to me that he was coming back to visit the village, I made up my mind that I'd be there to welcome him, being as we were boys and girls in school together.

It was a nice October evening when I started out. When I came down through town, I saw the council chamber all lit up, being it was the regular meeting night. And sitting in there I saw Silas Sykes and Timothy Toplady and Eppleby Holcomb and some more, smoking to heaven and talking to each other while the mayor addressed them. I wondered, as I went along, which of the thirteen hundred things we needed in the village they were talking about. I concluded they were talking about how to raise the money to do any one of them — some years away.

In the middle of town I came on Lucy Hackett. She was down buying her vegetables; she always

bought them at night, because then they give her a good deal for her money and some cheaper. Lucy was forty-odd, with long brown hair, braided round and round her head, crown after crown. She was tall and thin, with long arms, but a slow, graceful way of walking and of picking her way, holding up her old work skirt, that made you think of a grand lady moving around. And she had lovely dark eyes that made you like her anyway.

"Oh, Lucy," I says, "guess who I'm up here to meet — Nick Nordman."

She just stared at me. "Nick Nordman?" she says. "Coming *here?*"

"First time in twenty years," I says, and went off, with her face a-following me, and me a-chiding myself energetic: What was the matter with me to spring that onto her all of a sudden that way, and clean forget that her and Nick used to keep company for a year or more before he went off to town?

"Paper? Paper, Miss Marsh? As soon's we get 'em off the train?" says somebody. And there I saw from four to six little boys, getting orders for the city paper before the train had come in. But it was just whistling down by the gas works, and I was so excited I dunno if I answered them.

My gracious, what do you s'pose? On the back of the Dick Dasher accommodation train — we called it that because Dick Dasher was the conductor — came rolling in a special car, and a black porter

bounced off and set down a step, and out of the car got one lonely, solitary man.

"Is that a show car hitched on there, or what?" I says to Mis' Sturgis, that got off the train.

"That's what we was wondering," says she.

Dick Dasher, he was lifting off bundles of laundry and stuff that's intrusted to him to bring home all along the line, and he heard me. "If you're to meet somebody, that's the man-you're-looking-for's private car," says he. "He's the only other one off here."

Land, there he was! As soon as I faced the man the porter had bowed off the step, I knew him. Stockier, redder in the face, with blunt gray hair and blunt gray mustache, and clothes that fit him like a label round a bottle — sure as could be, it was him!

"Well, Nick!" I'd been going to say; but instead of it what I did say was, "Is this Mr. Nordman?"

He lifted his hat in the hand with his glove on. "It's Calliope Marsh, isn't it?" says he. "*I am* glad to see you. Mighty good of you to meet me, you know."

I don't know how it was, but the way he was and the way he spoke shut me up tighter than a clamshell. It had never entered my head to feel embarrassed or stiff with him until I saw him, and heard him being so formal. My land, he looked rich and acted rich! The other women stood there, so I managed to introduce them. "You meet Mis' Arnet. You meet

Mis' Sturgis. You meet Mis' Hubbelthwait," I says. "Them that was Hetty Parker and Mamie Bain and Cassie White — I guess you remember them, don't you?"

"Perfectly! Perfectly!" says he; and he done his heartiest, it seemed to me. But to bow quite low, and lift his hat higher and higher to each one — well, I dunno. It wasn't the way I thought it'd be.

"I thought we'd walk down," I says. "I thought mebbe you'd like to see the town —" But I kind of wavered off. All of a sudden the town didn't seem so much to me as it had.

"By all means," says he.

But just then there was above six-seven of them little boys found him. They'd got their papers now and they were bound to make a sale. "Paper? Buy a paper? Buy a newspaper, mister?" they says, most of them running backward in their bare feet right in front of him.

"Sure," he says, "I'll buy a paper. Give me one of *all* your papers.

"Now let's see," he says then. "Where's the pop-corn wagon?"

There wasn't any. None of the boys had ever heard of one.

"No pop-corn wagon? Bless me," he says, "you don't mean to say you don't have a circus every year — with pop-corn wagons and —"

A groan broke out from every boy. "No!" they

says in chorus. "Aw, it ain't comin'. Pitcairn's wanted to show here. But the town struck 'em for high license."

Mr. Nordman looked at the boys a minute. Then he rapped his cane down hard on the platform. "It's a burning shame!" he says out, indignant and human. "Ain't they even any ice-cream cones in this town?" he cries.

Oh, yes, there was them. The boys set up a shout. Mr. Nordman — he give them a nickel apiece, and the next instant the platform was swept clean of every boy of them. And him and me begun walking down the street.

"Bless me," he says. "What a nice little town it's grown! What a *very* nice little town!" And the way he said it shut me right up again.

I dunno how it was, but this was no more the way I'd imagined showing Nick Nordman over the village than anything on earth. I'd been going to tell him about old Harvey Myers' hanging himself in the garret we were then passing, but I hadn't the heart nor the interest.

Just as we got along down to the main block of Daphne Street, the council meeting was out and Silas and Eppleby and Timothy Toplady and the rest came streaming out of the engine house. Mis' Toplady and Mame Holcomb were sitting outside, waiting for their husbands, and so of course I marched Mr. Nicholas Nordman right up to the lot of them and

named them to him. Every one of them had known him over twenty years before.

Off came the gray hat, and to each one of the ladies he bowed low, and he says: "Delighted — *delighted* to see you again. Indeed we remember, don't we? And Timothy! Eppleby! Silas! I *am* delighted."

Then there was a long pause. We all just stood there.

Then Silas, as the chief leading citizen, he clears his throat and he says: "Do you — ah — remain long?" I don't know a better sample of what Mr. Nicholas Nordman's manner done to us all. *"Remain!"* Silas never said "remain" in his life before. Always, always he would, under any real other circumstances, have said "stay."

The whole few minutes was like that, while we just stood there. And perhaps it was like that most of all in the minute when it ought to have been like that the least. This was when Mr. Nordman told a plan he had. "I want you all," he said, "and a few more whom I well remember, to do me the honor to lunch with me to-morrow in my car. We can have a fine time to talk over the — ah — old days."

There was a dead pause. I guess everybody was figgering on the same thing; finally Eppleby asked about it. "Much obliged," says he. "What car?"

"My private car," says Mr. Nordman, "some-

where on the siding. You'll recognize her. She's gray."

" Much obliged," " Pleased, I'm sure," " Pleased to come," says everybody.

And we broke up and he walked along with me. Halfway down the block, who should I see ahead of me but Lucy Hackett. I never said anything till we overtook her. When I spoke she wheeled and flushed up like a girl, and put out her hand so nice and eager, and with her pretty way that was a glad way and was a grand lady way too.

I says: " Mr. Nordman, you meet Miss Lucy Hackett, that I guess you can remember each other."

He took off his hat and bowed. " Ah, Miss Lucy," says he, " this *is* a pleasure. How *good* to see you again! "

" I'm glad to see you, too, Nick," she says, and walked along on the inside of the walk with us, just *drooping!*

Yes, you might as well have tried to greet a fountain in full play as to greet him. He invited her to come to his luncheon next day. She said she would, with a nice little catch of pleasure in her tone; and he left her at her gate, him bowing tremendous. And it was the same gate he used to take her to when they were boy and girl. . . .

He said the same kind of a formal good night to me at my gate; and I was just going to go into my house, feeling sick and lonesome all rolled into one,

because there wasn't a mite of Nick Nordman about him at all; but all of a sudden, like an explosion out of a clear sky and all points of the earth, there came down onto us the most tremendous, outrageous racket that ever blasted a body's ears. It seemed to come from sky, earth, air and sea, at one and the same instants. And it went like this:

S————s————s!
Yow! Yow! Yow!
Who's————all————right?
Mr. N——o——rdm———a———n!

And then there was a great burst of yelling, and the whole seven boys came dropping out of trees and scrambling up from under the fence, and they ran off down the street, still yelling about him. Seems the ice-cream cones had made a hit.

Then — just for one little minute — I saw the real Nick Nordman that I remembered. His face broke into a broad, pleased grin, and he shoved his hat onto the back of his head, and he slapped his leg so that you could hear it. "Why," says he, "the durn little kids!"

We all dressed up in the best we had for the luncheon. Lucy Hackett come for me. She had on a clean, pretty print dress, and she looked awful nice.

"Oh, Lucy," I says to her right off, "ain't it too

bad about Nick? He ain't no more like he use' to be than a motor is like a mule."

Lucy, she flushed up instant. "I thought," says she, "he was real improved."

"Land, yes, improved!" I says. "Improved out of all recognizing him."

She staggered me some by giving a superior smile. "Of course," she says, "he's all city ways now. Of course he is."

Yes, of course he was. I thought of her words over and over again during that lunch. His private car had a little table fitted in most every seat and laid, all white, with pretty dishes and silver and flowers. Electric fans were going here and there. The lights were lighted, though it was broad day and broader. The porter, in a white coat, was frisking round with ice and glasses. But, most magnificent of all, was Mr. Nicholas Nordman, standing in the middle of the aisle in pure white serge.

"So pleased," says he. "So very pleased. Now this *is* good of you all to come."

I s'pose what we done was to chat; that, I figger, would be the name of it. But when he set us all down to the little tables, four and four, a deathlike silence fell on the whole car. It was hard enough to talk anyhow. Add to that the interestingness of all this novelty, and not one of us could work up a thing to say.

Mr. Nordman took the minister and Lucy Hackett

and me to his table, being we were all odd ones, and begun to talk benevolent about the improvements that a little town of this size ought to have.

"I s'pose they have grand parks and buildings in the cities, Nick?" says Lucy.

"Haven't you ever been to see them?" says he — oh, so kind!

"Never," says she. "But I've heard about them."

He sat staring out the car window across the Pump pasture, where the shadows were all laying nice. "City life is intensely interesting," says he. "Intensely so."

"As interesting as the time you stole Grandpa Toplady's grapes?" I says. I couldn't help it.

He tapped on the table. "Let us be in order for a few minutes," he says. He needn't of. We were in order already; we hadn't been anything else. Nobody was speaking a word hardly. But everybody twisted round and looked at him as he got onto his feet.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he says, and looked at us once round. "I have summoned you here for a purpose. On this, the occasion of my first visit back to my boyhood's home, I feel that I should — and, indeed, I most earnestly desire to — mark the time by some small token. Therefore, after some conversation about the matter during the forenoon, and much thought before my coming, I have decided to

set aside ten thousand dollars from to-day to be used for your town in a way which a committee — of which I hope that you, my guests of the day, will be appointed members — may decide. For park purposes, playgrounds, pavements — what you will; I desire to make this little acknowledgment to my native town, to this the home of my boyhood. I thank you."

He set down and, after a minute, everybody burst out and spatted their hands.

And then Silas Sykes, that is our professional leading citizen, got to his feet and accepted in the name of the town. Some of the other men said a little about the needs of the town; and Eppleby Holcomb, he got up and proposed a toast to the host. And by that time, the sun had got around considerable and it was blazing hot there on the side track, and us ladies in our black silks begun to think, longing, of our side piazzas and our palm-leaf fans.

We filed down the aisle and shook the hand of Mr. Nicholas Nordman and thanked him, individual and formal, both for the lunch and the big gift, and got out. But Lucy Hackett burst out talking, with the tears in her eyes. "Nick!" she says. "Oh, Nick, it was wonderful! Oh, it was the most wonderful time I ever had in my life — the luncheon with everything so pretty — prettier'n I ever saw things before; and then the present to the town. Ten thousand dollars! Oh, none of us can be happy

and grateful enough. And to think it's you that's done it, Nick — to think it's you!"

"Thank you, Miss Lucy," says he, "thank you; you are very good, I'm sure."

But I noticed that he wasn't so much formal now as he was lifeless; and I was wondering if he hadn't had a good time to his own luncheon party or what, when I heard something out on the platform, and then there come a-walking in a regular procession. It was all seven of the small boys again, and from seven to fourteen more besides, done up clean, with shoes on and here and there a collar.

"Is it time?" they says.

Nick Nordman stood with his hands in his pockets and grinned down on them. And it came to me to be kind of jealous of the boys, because he was with them just the way he ought to have been with us — and wasn't. But he was going off that night, with his car to be hitched onto the Through; and there wasn't any time for anybody to say any more, or be any different. So Lucy and I said good-by to him and left him there with the boys, dragging out together an ice-cream freezer into the middle of the gray private car.

I'd just got the door locked up that night about nine o'clock, and was seeing to the window catches before I went upstairs, when there come a rap to my front door.

"Who's there?" says I, with my hand on the bolt.

"It's Nick Nordman, Calliope."

"Land!" says I, letting him in. "I thought you'd gone off hitched to the Through."

"I was," he says, "but I ain't. I'm going to wait till five in the morning. And I'm going to talk over something with you."

Sheer through being flabbergasted, I led him past the parlor and out into the dining room and lit the lamp there. I'd been sewing there and things were spread on every chair. Think of receiving a millionaire in a place like that! But he never seemed to notice. He dropped right down on the machine cover that was standing up on end. And he put his elbow on the machine, and his head on his hand.

"Calliope," he says, "it ain't the way I thought it'd be. I wanted to come back here," he says. "I been thinking about it and planning on it for years. But it ain't like what I thought."

"Well," I says, soothing, "of course that's always the way when anybody comes back. They's changes. Things ain't the same. Folks has gone away —"

He cut me short off. "Oh," he says, "it ain't that. I expected that. There were enough folks here. It's something else. When I went away from here twenty years ago, I had just thirty-six dollars to go on. Now I've come back, and I don't mind telling you that I've got not far from six hundred thousand invested. Well, from the time I went

off, I used to plan how I'd come back some day, just about like I have come back, and see folks, and give something to the town, and give a lunch like I did to-day. I've laid awake nights planning it. And I liked to think about it."

"Well," I says, "and you've done it."

He didn't pay attention. "You remember," he says, "how I used to live over on the Slew with my uncle in the house that wasn't painted? He'd got together a cow somehow, and I use' to carry the milk. I never owned a pair of shoes till I was fifteen and earned them, and I never went to school after I was twelve. And when I went to the city I begun at the bottom and lived on nothing and went to night school and got through the whole works up to pardner for them I used to sweep out for. When I got my first ten thousand I thought: 'That's what I'm going to give that little old town — when I get enough more.' Well, I've done it, and I ain't got no more satisfaction out of it than if I'd thrown it in the gutter. And that"— he looked at me solemn —"was," says he, "the durndest, stiffest luncheon I ever et at."

"Well," I says, "of course —"

"When I think," he says, "of the way I planned it — with the men all coming around me, and slapping me on the back, and being glad to see me —"

"Oh, Nick!" I says. "Nick Nordman! *Was* that what you wanted?"

He looked at me in perfect astonishment. "Why," says he, "ain't that what anybody wants?"

I rose right up on my feet and I went over and put out my hand to him. "Why, Nick," I says, "don't you see? We was afraid of you. *I* was afraid of you. I froze right up and give up telling you about folks hanging themselves and all sorts of interesting things because I thought you wouldn't care. Why, they don't know you care!"

"Don't know I care?" says he. "But ain't I showed 'em — ten thousand dollars' worth?"

"Oh," I says, "that way! Yes, they know that way. In dollars they know; but they don't know in feelings. It's them," I says, "that counts." I set down by him, right on a pile of my new sewing. "Look here," I says, "Nick Nordman, if that's the way you feel about coming back and about the village, let's you and me fix up some way to make folks know you feel that way."

His face lit up. "How?" says he, doubting.

I thought a minute. I don't know why it was, but all at once there flashed into my head the way he had been with the boys, and the way the boys had been to him; that was what he was wanting, and that was what had been lacking, and that was what he didn't know how to make come. And he was lonesome for it.

"It ought to be," says I, feeling my way in my own head, "some way that'll make folks — Oh,

Nick," I says, jumping up, " I know the very thing! "

Pitcairn's Circus that wintered not twenty miles from us, and that had got so big and successful that it hadn't been to Friendship Village before in twenty years! And this year, when they'd wanted to come, the council had put the license so high that they refused it. And yet, one morning, we woke up to find the town plastered up and down with the big flaming bill posters of Pitcairn's Circus itself. The town had all it could do to believe in its own good luck. But there was no room to doubt. There they were:

BALLET OF TWELVE HUNDRED

TREMENDOUS PAGEANT AND SPECTACLE OF ESTHER, THE BEAUTIFUL QUEEN
MAGNIFICENT COSTUMES, REGAL WOMEN, GORGEOUS JEWELS, DIVERTING DANCERS, SOLOS AND ENSEMBLES

A HUNDRED TRAINED RIDERS, A HUNDRED ACROBATS, A HUNDRED ANIMALS FROM THE HEART OF THE WILD HILLS

ANIMALS TRAINED — ANIMALS SAVAGE — ANIMALS WONDERFUL

GIGANTIC STREET PARADE

FREE! FREE! FREE!

The whole town planned to turn out. There was to be no evening performance, and I schemed to have us all take our lunch — a whole crowd of us — and

go over to the Pump pasture right from the parade, and spread it under the big maple, and see the sights while we et. I broached it to Mis' Toplady and Timothy and Eppleby and Mame Holcomb and Postmaster and Mis' Sykes, and some more — Mis' Arnet and Mis' Sturgis and Mis' Hubbelthwait; and they, all of them, and Lucy and me, fell to planning on who'd take what, and running over to each other's houses about sweet pickles and things we hadn't thought of, and we had a real nice old-fashioned time.

I'll never forget the day. It was one of the regular circus days, bright and blue and hot. Lucy Hackett and I went down to see the parade together; and we watched it, as a matter of course, from the window where I'd watched circus parades when I was a little girl. The horses, the elephants, the cages closed and the cages opened, the riders, the bands, the clowns, the calliope — that I was named for, because a circus with one come to town the day I was born — had all passed when, to crown and close the whole, we saw coming a wagon of the size and like we had not often beheld before.

It was red, it had flags, pennons, streamers, festoons, balloons. Continually up from it went daylight firecrackers. From the sides of it fell colored confetti. And it was filled, not with circus folks, dressed gorgeous, but with boys. And we knew them! Laughing, jigging, frantic with joy — we

saw upward of a hundred Friendship Village boys. As the wagon passed us and we stared after it, suddenly the clamor of shouting inside it took a kind of form. We begun, Lucy and I, to recognize something. And what was borne back to us perfectly clamorous was:

S————s————s!
Yow! Yow! Yow!
Who's————all————right?
Mr. N——o——rdm———a———n!

"What in time are they yelling?" says a woman at the next window.

"Some stuff," says somebody else.

Lucy and I just looked at each other. Lucy was looking wild. "Calliope," says she, "how'd they come to yell that — that that they said?"

"Oh, I dunno," I says serene; "I could yell that too — on general principles. Couldn't you?" I says to her.

And Lucy blushed burning, rosy, fire red — on general principles, I suppose.

We were all to meet at the courthouse with our lunches and go right out to the Pump pasture. The tents were up already, flags were flying every which way, and folks were running all over, busy.

"Like somebody was giving a party," I says.

Lucy never said a word. She'd gone along, kind of breathless, all the way down. All us that know each other best were there. And we were dying to

get into each other's lunches and see what each other had brought. So Jimmy Sturgis went to building fire for the coffee, and Eppleby went off for water, and Silas Sykes, that don't like to do much work, he says:

" Timothy, supposing we go along down and buy all our tickets and avoid the rush? "

We let them go, and occupied ourselves spreading down the cloth, and cutting up cake and veal loaf, and opening up pickles and jell. The maple shade came down nice on the cloth, and appetizing little picnic smells of potato salad and other things begun getting out around, and the whole time was cozy and close up to. We were just disposing the deviled eggs in a mound in the middle, when Silas Sykes and Timothy come fair running up the slope.

" My dum! " says Silas. " They won't leave us buy no tickets. They say the show is free."

" Free! " says most everybody but me in chorus.

They say they ain't no ticket wagon, and they ain't going to be," says Silas. " What you going to make out that? "

" Blisterin' Benson! " says Timothy Toplady. " What I think is this, they're kidding us."

Lucy stood opening up a little bag she had. " Here's one of the slips they threw round this morning," she says; " I dunno —"

She had it out and we studied it. We'd all seen them blowing round the streets, but nobody had paid

any attention. She held it out and they all stared at it:

FRIENDSHIP VILLAGE
IS INVITED TO COME TO THE CIRCUS
THIS AFTERNOON
FREE
NO TICKETS ON SALE
FREE ADMISSION
FOR
FRIENDSHIP VILLAGE

" My gracious," says Mis' Sykes, " I never heard of such a thing since the world began."

" Land, land! " says Mis' Toplady. " But what does it *mean?* "

" What *does* it mean? " says Silas Sykes. " What are we all being a party to? "

" I guess it's *who* are we being a party to, Silas," I says, mild.

They all looked at me. And then they looked where I was looking, and I was looking at something hard. Coming out of the main tent was a mass of struggling, wriggling, dancing humanity — little humanity — in short, the boys that had rode in the big wagon. And walking in the midst of them was a man.

At first not even I recognized him. He had his coat off, and his collar was turned in, his hat was on the back of his head, and he was smiling throughout his whole face, which was red.

"Look-at!" says I. "I guess that's who we're the party to — all of us."

"What do you *mean?*" Silas says again.

"I mean," says I, "that Nick Nordman's had this whole circus come here to the village and give it to us free. And I say, let's us rush down there and drag him up here to eat with us!"

It came to them so sudden that they all moved off like one man, and, as we started together, not caring who stole the whole lunch that we left laying idle under the tree, I turned and took a look at Lucy.

Land, she looked as I haven't seen her look in twenty years! Her head was back, her eyes were bright, her face was bright, and she didn't know one of us was there. She just went down the slope, running.

We came on him as he was distributing nickels destined for the peanut man that had just got his wagon going, savory. Nick didn't see us till we were right there, and then the nicest shamefaced look come over him, and he threw the rest of the nickels among the boys and left them scrambling, and met us.

"Nick Nordman! *Is* this your doings?" Silas plumped it at him, accusing.

"Gosh, no!" says Nick, grinning like a schoolboy. "It's the kids' doin's."

And when a millionaire can say "Gosh" like he said it, you can't feel remote from him. Nobody

could. Oh, how we talked at him, all round, a good many at a time. And I think everything there was to say, we said it. Anyway, I can't think of any exclamation to speak of that we left unexclaimed.

We all streamed up the slope, Silas near walking backward most of the way to take in the full magnitude of it. We sat down round the potato salad and the deviled eggs and the veal loaf, beaming. And it made a real nice minute.

Oh, and it was no time till we got to living over the old days. And it was no time till Timothy and Eppleby were rolling over, recalling this and bringing back that. It was no time at all till every one of us was back twenty-five to thirty years, and telling about it. And Lucy, that I'd maneuvered should sit by Nick, I caught her looking across at me kind of superior, and as if she could have told me, all the while, that something or other was so!

"Let's us drink him a toast," says Timothy Toplady when we got through. "Look-at here: To Nicholas Nordman, the big man of Friendship Village."

"Yes, sir!" says Silas Sykes. "And to Nicholas Nordman, that's give us ten thousand dollars *and* a circus!"

"No, sir!" says Eppleby Holcomb, sudden. "None of them things. Let's us drink just to Nick Nordman, that's come back home!" He up with his hand, and it came down on Nick Nordman's

shoulder with a sound you could have heard all acrost the grounds.

And as he did that, just for a fraction of nothing, Nick Nordman met my eyes. And we both knew what we both knew.

Just then the band struck up, and the people were already pouring in the pasture, so we scrabbled things up and all started for the tent. Nick was walking with Lucy.

"Lucy," I heard him say, "you look near enough like you used to, for you to be you!"

She looked like a girl as she answered him. "You *are* you, Nick," she says, simple and neat and direct.

And me — I walked along, feeling grand. I kind of felt what all of us was feeling, and what everybody was going to feel down there in the big tent, when they knew. But far, far more, I sensed the thing that Nick Nordman, walking there with us, with about a hundred and fifty boys all waiting to sit down side of him at his circus — the thing that Nick Nordman had found out.

"God bless you, Calliope," says he, when he got a chance.

"Oh!" I says. "He has. He has! He's made folks so awful nice — when they just let it show through!"

BEING GOOD TO LETTY [1]

"THE poor little thing," says I. "Well, mustn't we be good to her?"

"Mustn't we?" says Mis' Fire Chief Merriman, wiping her eyes.

"Must we not?" says Mis' Silas Sykes — that would correct your grammar if the house was on fire.

My niece's daughter Letty had lost her father and her mother within a year, and she was coming to spend the summer with me.

"She's going to pick out the style monument she wants here in town," I says, "and maybe buy it."

"Poor thing! That'll give her something to put her mind on," says Mis' Sykes.

George Fred come in just then to fill my wood-box — his father was bound he should be named George and his mother hung out for Fred, so he got both onto him permanent. He was going to business college, and choring it for near the whole town. He used to swallow his supper and rush like mad from wood-box to cow all over the village. Nights when I heard a noise, I never thought it was a burglar any more. I turned over again and thought:

1 Copyright, 1914, *Woman's Home Companion.*

"That's George Fred cutting somebody's grass." I never see a man more bent on getting himself educated.

"George Fred," I says, "my grandniece Letty is coming to live with me. She's lost her folks. I thought we'd kind of try to be good to her."

"Trust me," says George Fred. "My cousin Jed, he lost his folks too. I can tell her about him."

The next day Letty came. I hadn't seen her for years. My land! when she got off the train, I never saw plainer. She was a nice little thing, but plain eyes, plain nose, plain mouth, and her hair — that was less than plain. But she was so smiling and so gentle that the plain part never bothered me a minute.

"Letty," says I, "welcome home." Mis' Merriman and Mis' Sykes had gone to the depot with me.

"Welcome home, child," says Mis' Merriman, and wiped her eyes! Mis' Merriman is human, but tactless.

"Welcome home, you poor thing," says Mis' Sykes, and she sniffed. Everything Mis' Sykes does she ought to have picked out to do the way she didn't.

But Letty, she took it serene enough. While we were getting her trunk, Mis' Sykes whispered to me:

"Are you sure she's the right niece? She ain't got on a stitch of mourning."

Sure enough, she hadn't. She wore a little blue dress.

" Like enough she couldn't afford it," says Mis' Merriman. And we thought that must be it.

They were both to stay for supper, and they'd each brought a little present for my niece. When she opened them, one was a black-edged handkerchief and the other was a package of mixed flower-seeds to plant next spring in her cemetery lot. Mis' Sykes and Mis' Merriman were both ready to cry all the while she untied them. But Letty smiled, serene, and thanked them, serene too, and put a pink aster from the table in her dress, and said, couldn't we go out and look at my flowers? And we went, Mis' Sykes and Mis' Merriman folding up their handkerchiefs and exchanging surprised eyebrows.

At the back door we came, plain in the face, on George Fred, whittling up my shavings.

" Two baskets of shavings, Miss Marsh, or one? "

" I guess," says I, " you'll earn your education better if you bring me in two."

George Fred never smiled. " I ain't earning my education any more, Miss Marsh," he says. " I've give it up. I can't make it go — not and chore it."

" Then you can't be a bookkeeper, George Fred? " I says.

" I've took a job delivering for the post-office store."

" Tell me about it, won't you? " says Letty.

George Fred told her a little about it, whittling my shavings.

" There ain't enough cows and grass and woodboxes in the village to make it go, seems though," he ends up.

Then he rushed into the house with my stuff, and headed for the Sykes's cow that we could hear lowing.

We talked about George Fred while we looked at the flowers, Letty all interested in both of them, and then we came back and sat on the front porch.

" Dear child," says Mis' Sykes, " wouldn't it be a comfort to you, now that you're among friends, to talk about your folks? What was it they died of? Was they sick long? "

Letty looked over to her, sweet and serene.

" Beautiful things happened while they were sick," she said. " A little child across the street used to come every morning with a flower or a fresh egg. Then there was an old man who picked every rose in his garden and sent them in. And a club there hired a singer who was at the theater to come and serenade them, just a few days before. Oh, so many beautiful things happened! "

Mis' Sykes and Mis' Merriman sat still. This isn't the way we talk about sickness in the village. We always tell symptoms and treatments and pain and last words and funeral preparations, right up to the time the hearse backs up to the door.

" She acts the queerest, to me, for a mourner," says Mis' Sykes, when she went for her shawl.

Next morning we went down, Letty and me, to pick out the monument. Letty, she priced them, and then she figured some on a card. Then she walked over and priced some more things, and then she came out. I s'posed she was going to think about it.

"Didn't she cry when she picked out the monument?" says Mis' Sykes to me over the telephone that noon.

"I didn't see her," says I, truthful.

That night, after he got the last cow milked, I see George Fred, in his best clothes, coming in our front gate. He was coming, I see, to do what I said — help be good to Letty and cheer her up.

"Miss Letty," says he, "I know just how you feel. My cousin Jed, he lost his folks a year ago. They took down with the typhoid, and they suffered frightful —"

"I'm so sorry, Mr. Fred," says Letty.

I explained. "Fred," says I, "is his other front name. His final name is Backus."

She colored up pretty, and went right on — it was curious: she hadn't been with me twenty-four hours hardly, and yet she didn't look a bit plain to me now.

"Mr. Backus," Letty says, "I've been thinking. Miss Marsh and I have got a little money we're not using. Don't you want to borrow it, and keep on at business college, and pay us back when you can?"

"Gosh!" says George Fred.

If I hadn't been aiming to be a lady, I dunno what I might have said similar.

They talked about it, and then George Fred went off, walking some on the ground and some in the air. "Letty!" says I, then, "where in this world —"

"Why," says Letty, "I'm going to get just headstones instead of a monument — and leave that boy be a bookkeeper instead of a delivery boy. Father and mother —" it was the only time I heard her catch her breath sharp —"would both rather. I know it."

Before breakfast next morning, I ran over to Mis' Sykes's and Mis' Merriman's, and told them.

"Like enough she done something better than buy mourning, too," says Mis' Merriman.

It was the first and only time in my life I ever see Mis' Silas Sykes's eyes fill up with tears.

"Why, my land," she says, "she's *using* her sorrow."

And all of a sudden, the morning and the world meant something more. And Letty, that we were going to be so good to, had brought us something like a present.

SOMETHING PLUS [1]

I LAID the letter up on the clock-shelf where I could see it while I did my dishes. I needed it there to steady me. I didn't have to write my answer till after dinner, because it wouldn't go out until the four o'clock mail anyway. I kind of left the situation lie around me all the morning so I could sense it and taste it and, you might say, be steeped in it, and get so I could believe.

Me — a kind of guest housekeeper for six months in a beautiful flat in the city — with two young married folks and a little baby to amuse myself with, and the whole world sitting around me, expansive, and waiting for me to enjoy it. It seemed as if the Golden Plan folks always think is going to open up for them had really opened now for me.

How I kept from baking my doughnuts and frying my sponge-cakes in lard, I dunno, but I did — sheer through instinct, I guess. And then I wrote my letter and took it down to the post-office. Go? Wouldn't I go? My letter just said:

"Ellen dear, you ridiculous child, did you think I could wobble for a single second? I'd made up my mind before

1 Copyright, 1916, *Pictorial Review*.

I got down the first page. I'll be there Monday night. Do you care if I wear your table-spread for dress-up, when I get there? All I've got is everyday — or not so much so. And for your wanting me, I'll say thank you when I get there. CALLIOPE."

On my way to mail my letter I came on Mis' Toplady and Mis' Holcomb-that-was-Mame-Bliss, downtown to get something for supper. And I told them all about it.

Mis' Toplady hunched her shawl farther up her back and sighed abundant.

"Ain't that just grand, Calliope?" says she. "To think you're going to do something you ain't been doing all your days."

That was the point, and she knew it.

"I says to Timothy the other night," she went on, "I says, 'Don't you wish I had something to tell you about, or you had something to tell me about, that we both of us didn't know by heart, forward and back?'"

"Eppleby and me, too," says Mis' Holcomb, "I wish to the land we could do something — or be something — that would give a body something to kind of — relate to each other."

"I know," I says. "Husbands and wives *is* awful simultaneous, I always think."

But I didn't say anything more, being I wasn't married to one; and they didn't say anything more, being they was.

Mis' Holcomb waved her cheese at me, cheerful.

"Be gay for us!" says she, and then went home to cook supper for her hungry family.

And so did I, wishing with all my heart that the two of them — that hadn't seen over the rim of home in thirty years — could have had my chance.

When I got to the city that night it was raining — rather, it was past raining and on up to pouring. So I got in a taxi to go up to Ellen's — a taxi that was nothing but an automobile after all, in spite of its foreign name, ending in a letter that no civilized name ought to end in. And never, never, not if I live till after my dying day, will I forget my first look at that living-room of theirs — in the apartment building, as big as a ship, and as lighted up as our church at Christmas-time, which was where Ellen and Russell lived.

A pretty maid let me in. I remember I went in by her with my eyes on her white embroidery cap, perked up on her head and all ironed up, saucy as a blue jay's crest.

"Excuse me," I says to her over my shoulder, "I've read about them, but yours is the first one I ever saw. My dear, you look like a queen in a new starched crown."

She was an awful stiff little thing —'most as stiff as her head-piece. She never smiled.

"What name?" she says, though — and I see she was friendlier than I'd thought.

"Why, mine's Calliope Marsh," I says, hearty. "What's yours?"

She looked so funny — I guess not many paid her much attention.

"Delia," she says. "You're expected," she says, and opened the inside door.

The room was long and soft and wine-colored, with a fire burning in the fireplace, and more lamps than was necessary, but that altogether didn't make much more light than one, only spread it out more. The piano was open, and there was a vase of roses — in Winter! They seemed to have them, I found out later, as casual as if there was a combined wedding and funeral in the house all the time. But they certainly made a beautiful picture.

But all this I sort of took in out of my eyes' four corners, while the rest of me looked at what was before the fire.

A big, low-backed chair was there, as fat and soft as a sofa. And in it was Ellen, in a white dress — in Winter! She wore them, I saw after a while, as casual as if she was at a party, perpetual. But there was something else there in a white dress, too, sitting on her lap, with his pink, bare feet stretched out to the blaze. And he was laughing, and Ellen was, too, at Russell, her husband, sitting on the floor, and aiming his head right at the baby's stomach, to hear him laugh out like — oh, like bluebells must be doing in the Spring.

" Pretty enough to paint," says I — which was the first they knew I was there.

It was a shame to spoil it, but Ellen and Russell sprang up, and tried to shake hands with me, though I wasn't taking the slightest notice of them. It was the baby I was engaged in. I'd never seen him before. In fact, I'd never seen Ellen and Russell since they were married two years before and went off to Europe, and lived on a peak of the Alps where the baby was born.

They took me to a gray little room that was to be mine, and I put on a fresh lace collar and my cameo pin and my best back comb. And then dinner was ready — a little, round white table with not one living thing on it but lace and roses and glass and silver.

" Why," says I, before I got through with my melon that came first, " why, you two must be perfectly happy, ain't you? "

And Ellen says, looking over to him:

" Perfectly, absolutely, radiantly happy. Yes, I am."

And this is what Russell done. He broke his bread, and nodded to both of us promiscuous, and he says:

" Considerable happier than any decent man has a right to be, I'm thinking."

I noticed that incident particular. And when I look back on it now, I know that that very first eve-

ning I begun noticing other things. I remember the talk went on about like this:

"Ellen," says Russell, "the dog show opened yesterday. They've got some great little pups, I hear. Aren't you going in?"

"Why — I am if you are," says Ellen.

"Nonsense," says Russell, "I can run in any time, but I can't very well meet you there in the middle of the day. You go in yourself."

"Well, I only enjoy it about a third as much to go alone," says she.

"The dogs don't differ when I'm along, you know, lady," says he, smiling.

"You know that isn't what I mean," she says.

And she looked over at him, and smiled at his eyes with her eyes. But I saw that he looked away first, sort of troubled. And I thought:

"Why, she acts as if not enjoying things when he ain't along is a kind of joyful sacrifice, that would please any man. I wonder if it does."

It happened two-three times through dinner. She hadn't been over to see some kind of a collection, and couldn't he come home some night early and take her? He couldn't promise — why didn't she go herself and tell him about it?

"You wouldn't have said that three years ago," she says, half fun, half earnest, and waited for him to deny it. But he didn't seem to sense what was expected of him, and he just et on.

Ain't it funny how you can sort of see things through the pores of your skin? By the time dinner was over, I knew most as much about those two as if I had lived in the house with them a week.

He was wonderful tender with her, though. I don't mean just in little loverlike ways, saying things and calling her things and looking at her gentle. I mean in ways that don't have to be said or called or looked, but that just are. To my mind they mean a thousand times more. But I thought that in her heart she sort of hankered for the said and called and looked kind. And of course they *are* nice. Nice, but not vital like the other sort. If you had to get along without one, you know which one would be the one.

When we went into the other room, Ellen took me to look at the baby, in bed, asleep, same as a kitten and a rosebud and a little yellow chicken, and all the things that you love even the names of. And when we went back, Ellen went to the piano and begun to play rambley things but low so's you could hardly hear them across the room, on account of the baby. I sank down and was listening, contented, and thinking of the most thinkable things I knew, when she looked over her shoulder.

" Russell," she says, " if you'll come and turn the music, I'll do that new Serenade."

Russell was on a couch, stretched out with a newspaper and his pipe, and I dunno if I ever seen a man

look more luxurious. But he got up, sort of a one-joint-at-a-time fashion, and came slumping over, with his hair sticking out at the back. He stood and turned the music, with his pipe behind him. And when she'd got through, he says:

"Very pretty, indeed. Now I'll just finish my article, I guess, dear."

He went back to his couch. And she got up, kind of quick, and walked over and stared into the fire. And I got up and went over and stared out the window. It seemed kind of indelicate to be looking, when I knew so well what was happening in that room.

For she'd forgot he was a person. She was thinking that he was just another one of her. And that seems to me a terrible thing for any human being to get to thinking about another, married to them or not though they be.

When I looked out the window, I needed new words. I hadn't realized the elevator had skimmed up so high with me — and done it in the time it would have taken the Emporium elevator, home, to go the two stories. But we were up ten, I found afterward. And there I was looking the city plain in the face. Rows and rows and fields of little lights from windows that were homes — and homes — and homes. I'd never seen so many homes in my life before, at any one time. And it came over me, as I looked, that in all the hundreds of them I was look-

ing at, and in the thousands that lay stretched out beyond, the same kind of thing must have gone on at some time or other, or be going to go on, or be going on now, like I saw clear as clear was going on with Ellen and Russell.

It was the third night I was there that the thing happened. I was getting along fine. I did the ordering and the managing and took part care of the baby and mended up clothes and did the dozens of things that Ellen wasn't strong enough to do. Delia and I had got to be real good friends by the second day.

Russell came home that third night looking fagged out. He was never nervous or impatient — I noticed that about him. I'd never once seen him take it out in his conversation with his wife merely because he had had a hard day. We'd just gone in from the dining-room when Russell, instead of lighting his pipe and taking his paper, turned round on the rug, and says:

"Dear, I think I'll go over to Beldon's a while tonight."

She was crossing the floor, and I remember how she turned and looked at him.

"Beldon's?" she said. "Have — have you some business?"

"No," Russell says. "He wanted me to come in and have a game of billiards."

" Very well," she says only, and she went and sat down by the fire.

He got into his coat, humming a little under his breath, and then he came over and stooped down and kissed her. She kissed him, but she hardly turned her head. And she didn't turn her head at all as he went out.

When he'd gone and she heard the apartment door shut, Ellen fairly frightened me. She sank down in the big chair where I had first seen her, and put her head on its arm, and cried — cried till her little shoulders shook, and I could hear her sobs. " Ellen," I says, " what is it? " Though, mind you, I knew well enough.

She put her arms round my neck as I kneeled down beside her. " Oh, Calliope, Calliope! " she says. " It's the end of things."

" End," says I, " of what? "

She looked in my face, with the tears streaming down hers. " Didn't you realize," she says, " that that is the first time my husband ever has left me in the evening — when he didn't have to? "

I saw that I had to be as wise as ten folks and as harmless as none, if I was to help her — and help him. And all at once I felt as if I *was* ten folks, and as if I'd got to live up to them all.

Because I didn't underestimate the minute. No woman can underestimate that minute when it comes

to any other woman. For out of it there are likely to come down onto her the issues of either life or death; and the worst of it is that, ten to one, she never once sees that it's in her power, maybe, to say whether it shall be life or death that comes.

"What of it?" I says, as calm as if I didn't see anything at all, instead of seeing more than she saw, as I know I did.

She stared at me. "Don't you understand," she says, "what it means?"

"Why, it means," says I, "that he wants a game of billiards, the way any other man does, once in a while."

She shook her head, mournful.

"Three years ago this Winter," says she, "only three short years ago, every minute of the world that Russell had free, he wanted to spend with me. That Winter before we were married, do you suppose that anybody — *any*body could have got him to play billiards with him if he could have been with me?"

I thought it over. "Well," I says, "no. Likely not. But then, you see, he couldn't be with you every evening — and that just naturally give him some nights off."

"'Some nights off,'" she says. "Oh, if you think *that* is the way he looks at it — There is no way in this world that I would rather spend my evenings," she says, "than to sit here with my husband."

"Yes," I says, "I s'pose that's true. I s'pose

that's true of most wives. And it's something they've got to get over thinking is so important."

She gasped. "Get over —" she says. "Then," says she, "they'll have to get over loving their husbands."

"Oh, dear, no, they won't — no, they won't," says I. "But they'll have to get over thinking that selfishness is love — for one thing. Most folks get them awful mixed — I've noticed that."

But she broke down again, and was sobbing on the arm of the chair. "To think," she says over, "that now it'll never, never be the same again. From now on we're going to be just like other married folks!"

That seemed to me a real amazing thing to say, but I saw there wasn't any use talking to her, so I just let her cry till it was time to go and feed the baby. And then she sat nursing him, and breathing long, sobbing breaths — and once I heard her say, "Poor, poor little Mother's boy!" with all the accent on the relationship.

I walked back into the middle of the long, soft, wine-colored room, trying to think if I s'posed I'd got so old that I couldn't help in a thing like this, for I have a notion that there is nothing whatever that gets the matter that you can't help some way if you're in the neighborhood of it.

Delia was just shutting the outside door of the apartment. And she came trotting in with her little, formal, front-door air.

"Two ladies to see you, Miss Marsh," she says. "Mis' Toplady and Mis' Holcomb."

No sooner said than heard, and I flew to the door, all of a tremble.

"For the land and forevermore," says I. "Where from and what for?"

There they stood in the doorway, dressed, I see at first glance, in the very best they'd got. Mis' Holcomb, that is the most backward-feeling of any of our women, was a step behind Mis' Toplady, and had hold of her arm. And Mis' Toplady was kind of tiptoeing and looking round cautious, to see if something not named yet was all right.

"There ain't any company, is there?" she says, in a part-whisper.

"No," says I, "not a soul. Come on in."

"Well," says she, relaxing up on her bones, "I asked the girl, and she says she'd see. What's the use of *being* a hired girl if you don't know who you've let in?"

"Sit down," says I, "and tell me what you're doing here, and why you've come. Is anything the matter? I see there ain't, though — with you in your best clothes. Throw off your things."

"Calliope," says Mis' Holcomb, "you'd never guess." She leaned forward in her chair. "We ain't come up for a single thing," says she, "not a thing!"

Mis' Toplady leaned forward, too. "And the

fare a dollar and ninety-six cents each way," says she, " and us a-staying at a hotel! "

" Go on," says I. " How long you going to be here? "

" Oh, mercy, only to-night," Mis' Holcomb says. " Why, the room is two-fifty just for us to sleep in it. I told him we shouldn't be setting in it a minute, but I guess he didn't believe me."

" Well, go on," says I. " Tell me what you've come for? "

Mis' Toplady leaned back and looked round her and sighed — and anybody could of told that her sigh was pleased and happy.

" Calliope," says she, " we've run away to stay overnight and one day on our chicken money, because we got so dead tired of home."

Mis' Holcomb just giggled out.

" It's a fact," she says. " We thought we'd come while you was here, for an excuse. But we were just sick of home, and that's the truth."

I looked at them, stupefied, or part that. Mis' Toplady and Mame, that's been examples of married contentment for thirty years on end, hand-running! It begun to dawn on me, slow, what this meant, as Mis' Toplady begun to tell me about it.

" You know, Calliope," she says, " the very best home in the world gets —"

Then I jumped up. " Hold on," I says. " You wait a minute. I'll be straight back again."

I run down the hall to the bedroom where Ellen was. She was just laying the baby down — even in my hurry I stopped to think what a heavenly and eternal picture that makes — a mother laying a baby down. There's something in the stooping of her shoulders and the sweep of her skirt and the tender drooping of her face, with the lamp-light on her hair, that makes a picture out of every time a baby is laid in his bed. The very fact that Ellen looked so lovely that way made me all the more anxious to save her.

" Ellen," I says, " come out here, please."

I pulled her along, with her hair all loose and lovely about her face — Ellen was a perfect picture of somebody's wife and a little baby's mother. You never in the world would have thought of her as a human being besides.

So then I introduced them, and I sat down there with them — the two I knew so well, and the one I'd got to know so well so sudden. And two of them were nearly sixty, and one was not much past twenty; but the three of them had so much in common that they were almost like one person sitting there with me, before the fire.

" Now," says I, " Mis' Toplady, go ahead. You needn't mind Ellen. She'll understand."

After a little bit, Mis' Toplady did go ahead.

" Well, sir," Mis' Toplady said, " I dunno what you'll think of us, but this is the way it was. I was

sitting home by the dining-room table with Timothy night before last. We had a real good wood fire in the stove, and a tin of apples baking in the top, that smelled good. And the lamp had been filled that day, so the light was extra bright. And there was a little green wood in the fire that sort of sung — and Timothy set with his shoes off, as he so often does evenings, reading his newspaper and warming his stocking feet on the nickel of the stove. And all of a sudden I looked around at my dining-room, the way I'd looked at it evenings for thirty years or more, ever since we went to housekeeping, and I says to myself, 'I hate the sight of you, and I wish't I was somewheres else.' Not that I do hate it, you know, of course — but it just come over me, like it has before. And as soon as my tin of apples was done and I took them into the kitchen, I grabbed my shawl down off the hook, and run over to Mis' Holcomb's. And when I shut her gate, I near jumped back, because there, poking round her garden in the snow in the dark, was Mame!

"So," Mis' Toplady continued, "we hung over the gate and talked about it. And we came to the solemn conclusion that we'd just up and light out for twenty-four hours. We told our husbands, and they took it philosophic. Men understand a whole lot more than you give them credit for. They know — if they're any *real* good — that it ain't that you ain't fond of them, or that you ain't thankful you're their

wife, but that you've just got to have things that's different and interesting and — and tellable. Anyhow, that's the way Mame and I figgered it out. And we got into our good clothes, and we came up to the city, and went to the hotel, and got us a bowl of hot oyster soup apiece. And then we had the street-car ride out here, and we'll have another going back. And we've seen you. And we'll have a walk past the store windows in the morning before train-time. And I bet when we get home, 'long towards night, our two dining-rooms'll look real good to us again — don't you, Mame?"

"Yes, sir!" Mame says, with her little laugh again. "And our husbands, too!"

I'd been listening to them — but I'd been watching Ellen. Ellen was one of the women that aren't deceived by outside appearances, same as some. Mis' Toplady and Mis' Holcomb didn't look any more like her city friends than a cat's tail looks like a plume, but just the same Ellen saw what they were and what they were worth. And when they got done:

"Do you mean you are going back to-morrow?" she says.

"Noon train," says Mame, "and be home in time to cook supper as natural as life and as good as new."

Ellen kept looking at them, and I guessed what she was thinking: A hundred miles they'd come for a change, and all they'd got was two street-car rides

and a bowl of oyster soup apiece and this call, and they were going home satisfied.

All of a sudden Ellen sat up straight in her chair.

"See," she says, "it's only eight o'clock. Why can't the four of us go to the theater?"

The two women sort of gasped, in two hitches.

"Us?" they says.

Ellen jumped up. "Quick, Calliope," she says. "Get your things on. Delia can stay with the baby. I'll telephone for a taxi. We can decide what to see on the way down. You'll go, won't you?" she asks 'em.

"Go!" says they, in one breath. "Oh — yes, *sir!*"

In no time, or thereabouts, we found ourselves down-stairs packing into the taxicab. I was just as much excited as anybody — I hadn't been to a play in years. Ellen told us what there was as we went down, but they might have been the names of French cooking for all they meant to us, and we left it to her to pick out where we were to go.

When we followed her down the aisle of the one she picked out, just after the curtain went up, where do you think she took us? *Into a box!* It was so dark that Mis' Toplady and Mame never noticed until the curtain went down, and the lights came up, and we looked round.

As for me, I could hardly listen to the play. I was thinking of these two dear women from the village,

and what it meant to them to have something different to do. But even more, I was watching Ellen, that had set out to make them have a good time, and was doing her best at it, getting them to talk and making them laugh, when the curtain was down. But when the curtain was up, it seemed to me that Ellen wasn't listening to the play so very much, either.

Before the last act, Ellen had to get back to the baby, so we left the two of them there and went home.

"Alone in the box!" says Mame Holcomb, as we were leaving. "My land, and my hat's trimmed on the wrong side for the audience!"

"Do we have to go when it's out?" says Mis' Toplady. "Won't they just leave us set here, on — and on — and on?"

I remember them as I looked back and saw them, sitting there together. And something, I dunno whether it was the wedding-trip poplin dress, or the thought of the two dining-rooms where they'd set for so long, or of the little lark they'd planned, sort of made a lump come and meet a word I was trying to say.

We'd got out to the entry of the box, when somebody came after us, and it was little bit of Mame Holcomb, looking up with eyes bright as a blue jay's at the feed-dish.

"Oh," she says to Ellen, "I ain't half told you — neither of us has — what this means to us. And I

wanted you to know — we both of us do — that the best part is, you so sort of *understood.*"

Ellen just bent over and kissed her. And when we came out in the hall, all light and red carpet, I see Ellen's eyes were full of tears.

And when we got in the taxicab: "Ellen," I says, "I thank you, too — ever so much. You did understand. So did I."

"I don't know — I don't know," she says "But, Calliope, how in the world do you understand that kind of thing?"

So I said it, right out plain:

"Oh," I says, "I guess sheer because I've seen so much unhappiness, and on up to divorce, come about sole because married folks *will* hunt in couples perpetual, and not let themselves be just folks."

When we got home — and we hadn't said much more all the way there — as we opened the living-room door, I saw that we'd got there first, before Russell. I was glad of that. Ellen ran right down the hall to the baby's room, and I took off my things and went down to the end of the room where the couch was, to lay down till she came back.

I must have dozed off, because I didn't hear Russell come in. The first I knew, he was standing with his back to the fire, filling his pipe. So I looked in his face, when he didn't know anybody was looking.

He had evidently walked home, and had come in

fresh and glowing and full of frosty air, and his cheeks were ruddy. He was smiling a little at something or other, and altogether he looked not a bit like the tired man that had come home that night to dinner.

Then I heard the farther door click, and Ellen's step in the hall.

He looked toward the door, and I saw the queerest expression come in his face. Now, there was Russell, a man of twenty-seven or eight, a grown man that had lived his independent life for years before he had married Ellen. And yet, honestly, when he looked up then, his face and his eyes were like those of a boy that had done something that he had been scolded for. He looked kind of apologetic and explanatory — a look no man ought to be required to look unless for a real reason. It seems so — ignominious for a human being to have to look like that when they hadn't done a thing wrong.

My heart sank some. I thought of the way Ellen had been all slumped down in that easy chair, crying and taking on. And I waited for her to come in, feeling as if all the law and the prophets hung on the next few minutes — and I guess they did.

She'd put on a little, soft house-dress, made you-couldn't-tell-how, of lace, with blue showing through, kind of like clouds and the sky. But it was her face I looked at, because I remembered the set look it had when she'd told Russell good-by. And when I see

her face now there in all that sky-and-clouds effect, honest, it was like a star.

"Hello, dear," she says, kind of sweet and casual, "put a stick of wood on the fire and tell me all about it."

I tell you, my heart jumped up then as much as it would of if I'd heard her say "I will" when they were married. For this was their new minute.

"Sit here," he says, and pulled her down to the big chair, and sat on the low chair beside her, where I'd seen him first. Only now, the baby wasn't there — it was just the two of them.

"Did you beat them all to pieces?" she asks, still with that blessed, casual, natural way of hers.

He smiled, sort of pleased and proud and humble. "I did," he owns up. "You're my wife, and I can brag to you if I want to. I walloped 'em."

He told her about the game, saying a lot of things that didn't mean a thing to me, but that must have meant to her what they meant to him, because she laughed out, pleased.

"Good!" she says. "You play a corking game, if I do say it. Do you know, you look a lot better than you did when you came home to dinner? I hate to see you look tired like that."

"I feel fit as a fish now," says he. "There's something about an evening like that with half a dozen of 'em — it isn't the game. It's the — oh, I don't know. But it kind of —"

He petered off, and she didn't make the mistake of agreeing too hard or talking about it too long. She just nodded, and pretty soon she told him some little thing about the baby. When he emptied his pipe, she said she thought she'd go to bed.

But when she got up, he reached up and pulled her back in the chair again, and moved so that he set with his cheek against hers. And he says:

"I've got something to tell you."

She picked up his hand to lean her head on, and says, "What? Me?"— which I'd noticed was one of the little family jokes, that no family should be without a set of.

"Do you know, Ellen," he said, "to-night, when I went out to go over to Beldon's, I thought you didn't like my going."

"You did?" she says. "What made you think that?"

"The way you spoke — or looked — or kissed me. I don't know. I imagined it, I guess," says he. "And — I've got something to own up."

She just waited; and he said it out, blunt:

"It made me not want to come home," says he.

"Not want to come home?" she says over, startled.

He nodded. "Lacy and Bright both left Beldon's before I did," he says. "I thought probably — I don't know. I imagined you were going to be

polite as the deuce, the way I thought you were when I went out."

"Oh," she says, "was I that?"

"So when Lacy and Bright made jokes about what their wives'd say if they didn't get home, I joined in with them, and laughed at the 'apron strings.' That's what we called it."

She moved a little away. "Did you do that?" she said. "Oh, Russell, I should hate that. I should think any woman would hate it."

"I know," he says. "I'm dead sorry. But I wanted you to know. And, dear —"

He got up and stood before her, with her hands crushed up in his.

"I want you to know," he says, kind of solemn, "that the way you are about this makes me — gladder than the dickens. Not for the reason you might think — because it's going to make it easy to be away when I want to. But because —"

He didn't say things very easy. Most men don't, except for their little bit of courting time.

"Well, thunder," he said, "don't you see? It makes me so sure you're my *wife* — and not just married to me."

She smiled up at him without saying anything, but I knew how balm and oil were curing the hurt that she thought she'd had that night when he went out.

"I've always thought of our each doing things —

and coming home and telling each other about them," he says, vague.

"Of *my* doing things, too?" she asks, quick.

"Why, yes — sure. You, of course," he says, emphatic. "Haven't you seen that I want you to do things sometimes, without me tagging on?"

"Is that the way you look at it?" she says, slow.

He gave her two hands a gay little jerk, and pulled her to her feet.

"Why," he said, "you're a person. And I'm a person. If we really love each other, being married isn't only something *instead*. It's something *plus*."

"Russell," she says, "how did you find that out?"

"I don't know," he says. "How does anybody find out anything?"

I'll never forget the way Ellen looked when she went close to him.

"By loving somebody enough, I think," she says.

That made him stop short to wonder about something.

"How did you find out, if it comes to that?" he asks.

"What? Me?" she says. "Oh, I found out — by special messenger!"

Think of Mis' Toplady and Mame being that, unbeknownst!

They turned away together, and walked down the room. The fire had burned down, and everything

acted like eleven-o'clock-at-night. It made a nice minute. I like to think about it.

"To-morrow morning," she told him, "I'm going to take Calliope and two friends of hers to the dog show. And you — don't — have — to — come. But you're invited, you know."

He laughed like a boy.

"Well, now, maybe I *can* drop in!" says he.

THE ART AND LOAN DRESS EXHIBIT [1]

"We could have a baking sale. Or a general cooking sale. Or a bazaar. Or a twenty-five-cent supper," says I.

Mis' Toplady tore off a strip of white cloth so smart it sounded saucy.

"I'm sick to death," she said, "of the whole kit of them. I hate a baking sale like I hate wash-day. We've had them till we can taste them. I know just what every human one of us would bring. Bazaars is death on your feet. And if I sit down to another twenty-five-cent supper — beef loaf, bake' beans, pickles, cabbage salad, piece o' cake — it seems as though I should scream."

"Me too," agrees Mis' Holcomb.

"Me too," I says myself. "Still," I says, "we want a park — and we want to name it Hewitt Park for them that's done so much for the town a'ready. And if we ever have a park, we've got to raise some money. That's flat, ain't it?"

We all allowed that this was flat, and acrost the certainty we faced one another, rocking and sewing in my nice cool sitting-room. The blinds were open,

1 Copyright, 1914, *The Delineator.*

the muslin curtains were blowing, bees were humming in the yellow-rose bush over the window, and the street lay all empty, except for a load of hay that lumbered by and brushed the low branches of the maples. And somewheres down the block a lawn-mower was going, sleepy.

" Who's that rackin' around so up-stairs? " ask' Mis' Toplady, pretty soon.

Just when she spoke, the little light footstep that had been padding overhead came out in the hall and down my stair.

" It's Miss Mayhew," I told them, just before Miss Mayhew tapped on the open door.

" Come right in — what you knocking for when the door sets ajar? " says I to her.

Miss Mayhew stood in the doorway, her rough short skirt and stout boots and red sweater all saying " I'm going for a walk," even before she did. Only she adds: " I wanted to let you know I don't think I'll get back for supper."

" Such a boarder I never saw," I says. " You don't eat enough for a bird when you're here. And when you ain't, you're off gallivanting over the hills with nothing whatever to eat. And me with a fresh spice-cake just out of the oven for your supper."

" I'm so sorry," Miss Mayhew says, penitent to see.

I laid down my work. " You let me put you up a couple o' pieces to nibble on," says I.

" You're so good. May I come too? " Miss Mayhew asks, and smiled bright at the other two women, who smiled back broad and almost tender — Miss Mayhew's smile made you do that.

" I s'pose them writing folks can't stop to think of food," Mis' Toplady says as we went out.

" Look at her lugging a book. What's she want to be bothered with that for? " Mis' Holcomb says.

But that kind of fault-finding don't necessarily mean unkindness. With us it was as natural as a glance.

Out in the kitchen, I, having wrapped two nice slices of spice cake and put them in Miss Mayhew's hand, looked up at her and was shook up considerable to see that her eyes were filled with tears.

I know I'm real blunt when I'm embarrassed or trying to be funny, but when it comes to tears I'm more to home. So I just put my hand on the girl's shoulder and waited for her to speak.

" It's nothing," Miss Mayhew says back to the question I didn't ask. " I — I —" she sobbed out quite open. " I'm all right," she ends, and put up her head like a banner.

To the two women in my sitting-room I didn't say a word of that moment, when I went back to them. But what I did say acted kind of electric.

" Now," says I, " day before yesterday was my sweeping day for the chambers. But I hated to disturb her, she set there scribbling so hard when I stuck

my head in. She ain't been out of the house since. If you'll excuse me, I'll whisk right up there and sweep out now."

The women begun folding their work.

"Why, don't hurry yourselves!" I says. "Sit and visit till I get through, why don't you?"

"Go!" says Mis' Toplady. "We ain't a-going. We're going to help."

"I been dying to get up-stairs in that room ever since I see her fix it up," Miss Holcomb lets out, candid.

Miss Mayhew's room — she'd been renting my front chamber for a month now — was little and bare, but her daintiness was there, like her saying something. And the two women began looking things over — the books, the pictures —"prints," Miss Mayhew called them — the china tea-cups, the silver-topped bottles, and the silver and ivory toilet stuff.

"My, what a homely picture!" Mis' Holcomb says, looking at a scene of a Japanese lady and a mountain.

"What in the world is these forceps for?" says Mis' Toplady, balancing an ivory glove-stretcher with Miss Mayhew's initials on. I knew that it was, because I'd asked her.

"What she wants of a dust-cap I dunno," Mis' Holcomb contributes, pointing to the little lace and ribbon cap hanging beside the toilet-table.

And I'd wondered that myself. She put it on for breakfast, like she was going to do some work; then she never done a thing the whole morning, only wrote.

Then all of a sudden was when I come out with something surprising.

"Why," says I, "it's gone!"

"What's gone?" they says. And I was looking so hard I couldn't answer — bureau, chest of drawers, bookshelves, I looked on all of them. "It ain't here anywhere," says I, "and he was *that* handsome —"

I told them about the photograph, as well as I could. It was always standing on the bureau, right close up by the glass — a man's picture that always made me want to say: "Well, you look just exactly the way you *ought* to look. And I believe you *are* it." He looked like what you mean when you say "man" when you're young — big and dark and frank and boyish and manly, with eyes that give their truth to you and count on having yours back again. That kind.

"Land," I says. "I'd leave a picture like that up in my room no matter what occurred between me and the one the picture was the picture of. I *couldn't* take it down."

But now it was down, though I remembered seeing it stand there every time I'd dusted ever since Miss Mayhew had come, up till this day. And when

I'd told the women all about it, they couldn't recover from looking. They looked so energetic that finally Mis' Toplady pulled out the wardrobe a little mite and peeked behind it.

"I thought mebbe it'd got itself stuck in here," she explains, bringing her head back with a great streak of dust on her cheek — and I didn't take it as any reflection whatever on my housekeeping. I've always believed that there's some furniture that the dust just rises out of, in the night, like cream — and of those the backs of wardrobes are chief.

Then she shoved the wardrobe in place, and the door that I'd fixed at the top with a little wob of newspaper so it would stay shut, all of a sudden swung open, and the other one followed suit. We three stood staring at what was inside. For my wardrobe, that had never had anything in it better than my best black silk, was hung full of pink and blue and rose and white and lavender clothes. Dresses they were, some with little scraps of shining trimming on, and all of them not like anything any of us had ever seen, outside of fashion books — if any.

"My land!" says I, sitting down on the edge of the fresh-made bed — a thing I never do in my right senses.

"Party clothes!" says Mis' Holcomb, kind of awelike. "Ball-gowns," she says it over, to make them sound as grand as they looked.

"Why, mercy me," Mis' Toplady says, standing close up and staring. "She's an actress, that's what she is. Them's stage clothes."

"Actress nothing," I says, "nor they ain't ball dresses — not all anyway. They're just light colors, for afternoon wear, the most of them — but like we don't wear here in this town, 'long of being so durable-minded."

"Have you ever seen her wear any of 'em?" demands Mis' Toplady.

"I can't say I ever have," I says, "but she likely ain't done so because she don't want to do different from us. That," says I, "is the lady of it."

Mis' Holcomb leaned close and looked at the things through her glasses.

"I think she'd ought to wear them here," she says. "I'd dearly love to look at things like that. Nobody ever wore things here like that since the Hewitts went away. We'd all love to see them. We don't see things like that any too often. I s'pose — I s'pose, ladies," says she, hesitating, "I s'pose it wouldn't do for us to look at them any closer up to, would it?"

We knew it wouldn't — not, that is, to the point of touching. But we all came and stood by the wardrobe door and looked as close up to as we durst.

"My," says Mis' Toplady, "how Mis' Sykes would admire to see these. And Mis' Hubbelthwait. And Mis' Sturgis. And Mis' Merriman."

And then she went on, real low:

"Why, ladies," she says, "why couldn't we have an exhibit — a loan exhibit? And put all those clothes on dress-makers' forms in somebody's parlor —"

"And charge admission!" says I. "Instead of a bazaar or a supper or a baking sale —"

"And get each lady that's got them to put up her best dress too," says Mis' Holcomb. "Mis' Sykes has never had a chance to wear her navy-blue velvet in this town once, and she's had it three years. I presume she'd be glad to get a chance to show it off that way."

"And Mis' Sturgis her black silk that she had dressmaker made in the city," says I, "when she went to her relation's funeral. She's never had it on her back but the once — it had too much jet on it for anything but formal — and that once was to the funeral, and then it was so cold in the church she had to keep her coat on over it. She's often told me about it, and she's real bitter about it, for her."

Mis' Toplady flushed up. "I've got," she said, "that lavender silk dressing gown my nephew sent me from Japan. It's never been out of its box since it come, nine years ago, except when I've took somebody up-chamber to show it to them. Do you think —"

"Of course we'll have it," I said, "and, Mis' Top-

lady, your wedding-dress that you've saved, with the white raspberry buttons. And there's Mis' Merriman's silk-embroidered long-shawl — oh, ladies," I says, "won't it be nice to see some elegant clothes wore for once here in the village, even if it's only on dressmaker's forms?"

"So be Miss Mayhew'll only let us take hers," says Mis' Holcomb, longing.

We planned the whole thing out, sitting up there till plump six o'clock when the whistle blew, and not a scratch of sweeping done in the chamber yet. The ladies both flew for home then, and I went at the sweeping, being I was too excited to eat anyway, and I planned like lightning the whole time. And I made up my mind to arrange with Miss Mayhew that night.

I'd had my supper and was rocking on the front porch when she came home. The moon was shining up the street, and the maple leaves were all moving pleasant, and their shadows were moving pleasant, too, as if they were independent. Everybody's windows were open, and somewhere down the block some young folks were singing an old-fashioned love-song — I saw Miss Mayhew stand at the gate and listen after she had come inside. Then she came up the walk slow.

"Good evening and glad you're back," said I. "*Ain't* this a night?"

She stood on the bottom step, looking the moon in

the face. The air was sweet with my yellow roses — it was almost as if the moonlight and they were the same color and both sweet-smelling. And her a picture in that yellow frame.

"Oh, it is — it is," she says, and she sighs.

"This," I says, "isn't a night to sigh on."

"No," she says, "it isn't — is it? I won't do it again."

"Sit down," I says, "I want to ask you something."

So then I told her how her wardrobe door had happened to swing open, and what we wanted to do.

"— we don't see any too many pretty things here in the village," I said, "and I'd kind of like to do it, even if we didn't make a cent of money out of it for the park."

She didn't say anything — she just sat with her head turned away from me, looking down the street.

"— us ladies," I said, "we don't dress very much. We can't. We've all had a hard time to get together just what we've had to have. But we all like pretty things. I s'pose most all of us used to think we were going to have them, and these things of yours kind of make me think of the way I use' to think, when I was a girl, I'd have things some day. Of course now I know it don't make a mite of difference whether anybody ever had them or not — there's other things and more of them. But still,

now and then you kind of hanker. You kind of hanker," I told her.

Still she didn't say anything. I thought mebbe I'd offended her.

"We wouldn't touch them, you know," I said. "We'd only just come and look. But if you'd mind it any —"

Then she looked up at me, and I saw that her eyes were brimming over with tears.

"Mind!" she said. "Why, no — no! If you can really use those things of mine. But they're not nice things, you know."

"Well," I says, "I dunno as us ladies would know that. But you do love *light* things when you've had to go around dressed dark, either 'count of economy or 'count of being afraid of getting talked about. Or both."

She got up and leaned and kissed me, light. Wasn't that a funny thing to do? But I loved her for it.

"Anything I own," she says, "is yours to use just the way you want to use it."

"You're just as sweet as you are pretty," I told her, "and more I dunno who could say about no one."

I lay awake most all night planning it, like you will. I spent most of the next day tracking round seeing folks about it. And everybody pitched in to work, both on account of needing the money for

the little park us ladies had set our hearts on, and on account of being glad to have some place, at last, to show what clothes we'd got to some one, even if it was nobody but each other.

"Oh," says Mis' Holcomb, "I was thinking only the other day if only somebody'd get married. You know we ain't had an evening party in this town in years — not since the Hewitts went away. But I couldn't think of a soul likely to have a big evening wedding for their daughter but the Mortons, and little Abbie Morton, she's only 'leven. It'd take another good six years before we could get asked to that. And I did want to get a real chance to wear my dress before I made it over."

"The Prices might have a wedding for Mamie," says Mis' Toplady, reflective. "Like enough with a catyier and all that. But I dunno's Mamie's ever had a beau in her life."

We were to have the exhibit — the Art and Loan Dress Exhibit, we called it — at my house, and I tell you it was fun getting ready for it. But it was hard work, too, as most fun is.

The morning of the day that was the day, everybody came bringing their stuff over in their arms. We had dress-forms from all the dress-makers and all the stores in town, and they were all set up around the rim of my parlor. Mis' Sturgis had just got her black silk put up and was trying to make out whether side view to show the three quarters

train or front view to show the jet ornament was most becoming to the dress, when Miss Mayhew brought in her things and began helping us.

"How the dead speaks in clothes," Mis' Sturgis says. "This jet ornament was on my mother's bonnet for twelve years when I was a little girl."

"The Irish crochet medallion in the front of my basque," says Mis' Merriman, "was on a scarf of my mother's that come from the old country. It got old, and I took the best of it and appliquéd it on a crazy quilt and slept under it for years. Then when I see Irish crochet beginning to be wore in the magazines again, I ripped it off and ragged out in it."

"Oh," says Miss Mayhew, all of a sudden. "What a lovely shawl! What you going to put that on?"

"Where?" says we.

"Why this," she says — but still we didn't see, for she didn't have anything but the shawl Mis' Hubbelthwait had worn in over her head. "This Paisley shawl," Miss Mayhew says.

"My land!" says Mis' Hubbelthwait, "I put that on me to go through the cold hall and bring in the kindling, and run out for a panful of chips, and like that."

Miss Mayhew smiled. "You must put that on a figure," she says. "Why, it's beautiful. Look at those colors."

"All faded out," says Mis' Hubbelthwait, and

thought Miss Mayhew was making fun of her. But she wasn't. And she insisted on draping it and putting it near the front. Miss Mayhew was nice, but she was queer in some things. I'd upholstered my kitchen rocker with part of my Paisley shawl, and covered the ironing-board under the cloth with the rest of it — and nothing would do but that old chair must be toted up in her room! And yet I'd spent four dollars for a new golden-oak rocker when she'd engaged the rooms. . . . But me, I urged them to let her do as she pleased with Mis' Hubbelthwait's shawl that morning; because I remembered that what had been the matter in my kitchen the afternoon before was probably still the matter. And moreover, I'd looked when I made the bed, and I see that the picture hadn't been set back on the bureau.

Well, then we began putting up Miss Mayhew's own things — and I tell you they were pretty. There wasn't much to them — little slimpsey soft silk things, made real inexpensive with no lining, and not fussed up at all — but they had an air to them that you can hardly ever get into a dress, no matter how close you follow your paper pattern. She had a pink and a blue and a white and a lavender — and one lovely rose gown that I took and held up before her.

"I'd dearly love to see you in this," says I. "I bet you look like a rose in it — or more so."

Her face, that was usually bright and soft all in one, sort of fell, like a cloud had blown over it.

"I always liked to wear that dress," she says. "I had — there were folks that liked it."

"Put it on to-night," I says, "and take charge of this room for us."

But she kind of shrunk back, and shook her head.

And I thought, like lightning, "It was the Picture Man that was on the bureau that liked to see you in that dress — or I miss my guess."

But I never said a word, and went on putting a dress-form together.

The room looked real pretty when we got all the things up. There were fourteen dresses in all, around the room. In the very middle was Mis' Toplady's wedding-dress — white silk, made real full, with the white raspberry buttons.

"For twenty years," she said, "it's been in the bottom drawer of the spare room. It's nice to see it wore."

And we all thought it was so nice that we borrowed the wax figure from the White House Emporium, and put the dress on. It looked real funny, though, to see that smirking, red-cheeked figure with lots of light hair and its head on one side, coming up out of Mis' Toplady's wedding-dress.

Us ladies were all ready and on hand early that night, dressed in our black alpacas and wearing

white aprons, most of us; and Miss Mayhew had on a little white dimity, and she insisted on helping in the kitchen — we were going to give them only lemonade and sandwiches, for we were expecting the whole town, and the admission was only fifteen cents apiece.

Then — I remember it was just after the clock struck seven — my telephone rang. And it was a man's voice — which is exciting in itself, no man ever calling me up without it's the grocery-man to try to get rid of some of his fruit that's going to spoil, or the flour and feed man to say he can't send up the corn-meal till to-morrow, after all. And this Voice wasn't like either one of them.

He asked if this was my number, brisk and strong and deep and sure, and as if he was used to everything there is.

"Is Miss Marjorie Mayhew there?" says he.

"Miss *Marjorie* Mayhew," says I, thoughtful. "Why, I dunno's I ever heard her front name."

"Whose front name?" says he.

"Why," says I, "Miss Mayhew's. That's who we're talking about, ain't it?"

"Oh," says he, "then there *is* a Miss Mayhew staying there?"

"No, sir," says I short, "there ain't. She's *the* Miss Mayhew — the one I mean — and anybody that's ever seen her would tell you the same thing."

He was still at that, just for a second. And when he spoke again, his voice had somehow got a little different — I couldn't tell how.

"I see," says he, "that you and I understand each other perfectly. May I speak to the Miss Mayhew?"

"Why, sure," says I hearty. "Sure you can."

So I went in the kitchen and found her where she was stirring lemon-juice in my big stone crock. And when I told her, first she turned red-rose red, and then she turned white-rose white.

"Me?" she says. "Who can want me? Who knows I'm here?"

"You go on and answer the 'phone, child," I says to her. "Him and me, we understand each other perfectly."

So she went. I couldn't help hearing what she said.

"Yes."

"Yes."

"You are?"

"It doesn't matter in the least."

"If you wish."

"Two automobiles?"

"Very well. Any time."

"Oh, not at all, I assure you."

— all in a cool, don't-care little voice that I never in this wide world would have recognized as Miss Mayhew's voice. Then she hung up. And I

stepped out of the cloak-closet. I took hold of her two shoulders and looked in her eyes. And I saw she was palpitating and trembling and breathless and pink.

"Marjorie Mayhew," I says, "I never knew that was your name, till just now when that Nice Voice asked for you. But stranger though you are to me — or more so — I want to say something to you: *If* you ever love — I don't say That Nice Voice, but Any Nice Voice, don't you never, never speak cold to it like you just done. No matter what —"

She looked at me, kind of sweet and kind of still, and long and deep. And I saw that we both knew what we both knew.

"I know," she says. "Folks are so foolish — oh, so foolish! I know it now. And yet —"

"And yet you young folks hurt love for pride all the time," I says. "And love is gold, and pride is clay. And some of you never find it out till too late."

"I know," she says in a whisper, "I know —" Then she looked up. "Twelve folks are coming here in two automobiles in about half an hour. The telephone was from Prescott — that's about ten miles, isn't it? It's the Hewitts. From the city — and some guests of theirs —"

"The Hewitts?" I says over. "From the city?"

She nodded.

"The Hewitts," I pressed on, "that give us our library? And that we want to name the park for?"

Yes. It was them.

"Why, my land," I says, "my land — let me tell the ladies."

I rushed in on them, where they were walking 'round the parlor peaceful, each lady looking over her own dress and giving little twitches to it here and there to make the set right.

"The Hewitts," I says, "that we've all wanted to meet for years on end. And now look at us — dressed up in every-day, or not so much so, when we'd like to do them honor."

Mis' Toplady, standing by her wedding dress on the wax form, waved both her arms.

"Ladies!" she says. "S'posing we ain't any of us dressed up. Can't we dress up, I'd like to know? Here's all our best bib and tucker present with us. What's to prevent us putting it on?"

"But the exhibit!" says Mis' Holcomb most into a wail. "The exhibit that they was to pay fifteen cents apiece for?"

"Well," says Mis' Toplady majestic, "they'll have it, won't they? We'll tell them which is which — only we'll all be wearing our own!"

Like lightning we decided. Each lady ripped her own dress off its wire form and scuttled for up-stairs. I took mine too, and headed with them; and at the

turn I met Marjorie Mayhew, running down the stairs.

"Oh!" she says, kind of excited and kind of ashamed. "*Do* you think it'd spoil your exhibit if I took — if I wore — that rose dress —"

"No, child," I says. "Go right down and get it. That won't spoil the exhibit. The exhibit," I says, "is going to be exhibited *on*."

We were into our clothes in no time, hooking each other up, laughing like girls.

The first of us was just beginning to appear, when the two big cars came breathing up to the gate.

In came the Hewitts, and land — in one glance I saw there was nothing about them that was like what we'd always imagined — nothing grand or sweeping or rustling or cold. I guess that kind of city folks has gone out of fashion, never to come back. The Hewitts didn't seem like city folks at all — they seemed just like folks. It made a real nice surprise. And we all got to be folks, short off. For when I ushered them into my parlor, there were all the wire dress-forms setting around with nothing whatever on.

"My land," I says, "we might as well own right up to what we done," I says. And I told them, frank. And I dunno which enjoyed it the most, them or us.

The minute I saw him, I knew him. I mean The

Nice Voice. I'd have known him by his voice if I hadn't been acquainted with his face, but I was. He was the picture that wasn't on Miss Marjorie Mayhew's dresser any longer — and, even more than the picture, he looked like what you mean when you say "man." When I was introduced to him I wanted to say: "How do you do. Oh! I'm *glad* you look like that. She deserves it!"

But even if I could, I'd have been struck too dumb to do it. For I caught his name — and he was the only son of the Hewitts, and heir-evident to all his folks.

The only fault I could lay to his door was that he didn't have any eyes. Not for us. He was looking every-which-way, and I knew for who. So as soon as I could, I slips up to him and I says merely:

"This way."

He was right there with me, in a second. I took him up the stairs, and tapped at my front chamber door.

She was setting in there on her couch, red as a red rose this time. And when she see who was with me, she looked more so than ever. But she spoke gentle and self-possessed, as women can that's been trained that way all their days.

"How do you do?" says she, and gave him her hand, stranger-cool.

That man — he pays no more attention to me than if I hadn't been there. He just naturally

walked across the room, put his hands on her shoulders, looked deep into her eyes for long enough to read what she couldn't help being there, and then he took her in his arms.

I slipped out and pulled the door to. And in the hall I met from six to seven folks coming up to take their things off, and heading straight for the front chamber. I stood myself up in front of the door.

"Walk right into my room," says I — though I knew full well that it looked like Bedlam, and that I was letting good housekeepers in to see it. And so they done. And, more heads appearing on the stairs about then, I see that what I had to do was to stand where I was — if they were to have their Great Five Minutes in peace.

Could anybody have helped doing that? And could anybody have helped hearing that little murmur that came to me from that room?

"Dearest," he said, "how could you — how could you do like this? I've looked everywhere —"

"I thought," she said, "that you'd never come. I thought you weren't looking."

"You owe me," he told her solemnly, "six solid weeks of my life. I've done nothing since you left."

"When a month went by," she owned up, "and you hadn't come, I — I took your picture off my bureau."

" Where'd you put it? " he asks, stern.

She laughed out, kind of light and joyous.

" In my hand-bag," says she.

Then they were still a minute.

" Walk right to the left, and left your things right on my bed . . ." I heard myself saying over, crazy, to some folks. But then of course you always do expect your hostess to be more or less crazy-headed, and nobody thought anything of it, I guess.

They came out in just a minute, and we went down the stairs together. And on the way down he says to her:

" Remember, you're going back with us to-night. And I'm never going to let you out of my sight again — ever."

And she said: " But I know why. Because it'd be hard work to make me go. . . ."

At the foot of the stairs Mis' Holcomb met me, her silk dress's collar under one ear.

" Have you heard? " she says. " We didn't have much exhibit, but the Hewitts have give us enough for the park — outright."

I'd wanted that park like I'd wanted nothing else for the town. But I hardly sensed what she said. I was looking acrost to where those two stood, and pretty soon I walked over to them.

" Is this the Miss Mayhew you were referring to? " I ask' him, demure.

"This," says he, his nice eyes twinkling, "is the only Miss Mayhew there is."

"You may say that now," says I then, bold. "But — I see you won't call her that long."

He looked at me, and she looked at me, and they both put out their hands to me.

"I see," says he, "that we three understand one another perfectly."

ROSE PINK [1]

The Art and Loan Dress Exhibit recalls a story of my early association with Calliope Marsh in Friendship Village, when yet she was not well known to me — her humanity, her habit of self-giving, her joy in life other than her own.

Afterward I knew that I had never seen a woman more keenly and constantly a participant in the lives of others. She was hardly individuated at all. She suffered and joyed with others, literally, more than she did in her "own" affairs. I now feel certain that before we can reach the individualism which we crave — and have tried to claim too soon — we must first know such participation as hers in all conscious life — in all life, conscious or unconscious.

This is that early story, as I then wrote it down:

CALLIOPE MARSH had been having a "small company." Though nominally she was hostess to twenty of us, invited there for six o'clock supper, yet we did not see Calliope until supper was done. Mis' Postmaster Sykes had opened the door for us, had told us to "walk up-stairs to the right an' lay aside your things," and had marshaled us to the dining-room and so to chairs outlining the room. And

1 Copyright, 1913, *The Delineator.*

there the daughters of most of the guests had served us while Calliope stayed in the kitchen, with Hannah Hager to help her, seasoning and stirring and "getting it onto the plates." Afterward, flushed and, I thought, lovably nervous, Calliope came in to receive our congratulations and presently to hear good-nights. But I, who should have hurried home to Madame Josephine, the modiste from town who that week called my soul her own, waited for a little to talk it over — partly, I confess, because a fine, driving rain had begun to fall.

We sat in the kitchen while Calliope ate her own belated supper on a corner of the kitchen table; and on another corner, thin, tired little Hannah Hager ate hers. And, as is our way in Friendship, Hannah talked it over, too — that little maid-of-all-work, who was nowhere attached in service, but lived in a corner of Grandma Hawley's cottage and went tirelessly about the village ministering to the needs of us all.

"Everything you hed was lovely, Miss Marsh," Hannah said with shining content and a tired sigh. "You didn't hev a single set-back, did you?"

"Well, I dunno," Calliope doubted; "it all tastes like so much chips to me, even now. I was kind o' nervous over my pressed ham, too. I noticed two o' the plates didn't eat all theirs, but the girls couldn't rec'lect whose they was. Did you notice?"

"No, sir, I didn't," Hannah confessed with a

shake of the head at herself. "I did notice," she amended brightly, "that Mis' Postmaster Sykes didn't make way with all her cream, but I guess ice-cream don't agree with her. She's got a kind o' peculiar stomach."

"Well-a, anybody hev on anything new?" Calliope asked with interest. "I couldn't tell a stitch anybody hed on. I don't seem to sense things when I hev company."

There was no need for me to give evidence.

"Oh!" Hannah said, as we say when we mean a thing very much, "didn't you see Lyddy Eider?"

"Seems to me I did take it in she hed on something pink," Calliope remembered.

Little Hannah stood up in her excitement.

"Pink, Miss Marsh!" she said. "I should say it was. Pink with cloth, w'ite. The w'ite," Hannah illustrated it, "went here an' so, in points. In between was lace an' little ribbon, pink too. An' all up so was buttons. An' it all rustled w'en she stirred 'round. An' it laid smooth down, like it was starched an' ironed, an' then all to once it'd slimpse into folds, soft as soft. An' every way she stood it looked nice — it didn't pucker nor skew nor hang wrong. It was dressmaker-made, ma'am," Hannah concluded impressively. "An' it looked like the pictures in libr'ry books. My! You'd ought 'a' seen Gramma Hawley. She fair et Lydia up with lookin' at her."

I, who was not yet acquainted with every one in Friendship, had already observed the two that day — brown, bent Grandma Hawley and the elaborately self-possessed Miss Eider, with a conspicuously high-pitched voice, who lived in the city and was occasionally a guest in the village. The girl, who I gathered had once lived in Friendship, was like a living proof that all village maids may become princesses; and the brooding tenderness of the old woman had impressed me as might a mourning dove mothering some sprightly tanager.

"Gramma Hawley brought her up from a little thing," Calliope explained to me now, "and a rich Mis' Eider, from the city, she adopted her, and Gramma let her go. I guess it near killed Gramma to do it — but she'd always been one to like nice things herself, and she couldn't get them, so she see what it'd mean to Lyddy. Lyddy's got pretty proud, she's hed so much to do with, but she comes back to see Gramma sometimes, I'll say that for her. Didn't anybody else hev on anything new?"

"No," Hannah knew positively, "they all come out in the same old togs. When the finger-bowl started I run up in the hall an' peeked down the register, so's to see 'em pass out o' the room. Comp'ny clo'es don't change much here in Friendship. Mis' Postmaster Sykes says yest'day, when we was ironin': 'Folks,' she says, 'don't dress as much here in Friendship as I wish't we did. Land knows,'

Mis' Sykes says, '*I* don't dress, neither. But I like to see it done.' "

Calliope, who is sixty and has a rosy, wrinkled face, looked sidewise down the long vista of the cooking-stove coals.

" Like to see it done! " she repeated. " Why, I get so raving hungry to see some colored dress-goods on somebody seem's though I'd fly. Black and brown and gray — gray and brown and black hung on to every woman in Friendship. Every one of us has our clo'es picked out so everlastin' *durable*."

Hannah sympathetically giggled with, " Don't they, though? "

" My grief! " Calliope exclaimed. " It reminds me, I got my mother's calicoes down to pass 'round and I never thought to take them in."

She went to her new golden oak kitchen cabinet — a birthday gift to Calliope from the Friendship church for her services at its organ — and brought us her mother's " calicoes "— a huge box of pieces left from every wool and lawn and " morning housework dress " worn by the Marshes, quick and passed, and by their friends. Calliope knew them all; and I listened idly while the procession went by us in sad-colored fabrics —" black and brown and gray — gray and brown and black."

I think that my attention may have wandered a little, for I was recalled by some slight stir made by Hannah Hager. She had risen and was bending

toward Calliope, with such leaping wistfulness in her eyes that I followed her look. And I saw among the pieces, like a bright breast in sober plumage, a square of chambray in an exquisite color of rose.

"Oh —" said little Hannah softly, "hain't that just *beauti*-ful?"

"Like it, Hannah?" Calliope asked.

"My!" said the little maid fervently.

"It was a dress Gramma Hawley made for Lyddy Eider when she was a little girl," Calliope explained. "I dunno but what it was the last one she made for her. Pretty, ain't it? Lyddy always seemed to hanker some after pink. Gramma mostly always got her pink." Calliope glanced at Hannah, over-shoulder. "Why don't you get a pink one for *then?*" she asked abruptly; and, "When is it to be, Hannah?" she challenged her, teasingly, as we tease for only one cause.

On which I had pleasure in the sudden rose-pink of Hannah's face, and she sank back in her seat at the table corner in the particular, delicious anguish that comes but once.

"There, there," said Calliope soothingly, "no need to turn any more colors, 's I know of. Land, if they ain't enough sandwiches left to fry for my dinner."

When, presently, Calliope and I were in the dining-room and I was watching her "redd up" the table while Hannah clattered dishes in the kitchen,

I asked her who Hannah's prince might be. Calliope told me with a manner of triumph. For was he not Henry Austin, that great, good-looking giant who helped in the post-office store, whose baritone voice was the making of the church choir and on whom many Friendship daughters would not have looked unkindly?

"I'm so glad for her," Calliope said. "She ain't hed many to love besides Gramma Hawley — and Gramma's so wrapped up in Lyddy Eider. And yet I feel bad for Hannah, too. All their lives folks here'll likely say: 'How'd he come to marry *her?*' It's hard to be that kind of woman. I wish't Hannah could hev a wedding that would show 'em she *is* somebody. I wish't she could hev a wedding dress that would show them how pretty she is — a dress all nice, slim lines and folds laid in in the right places and little unexpected trimmings like you wouldn't think of having if you weren't real up in dress," Calliope explained. "A dress like Lyddy Eider always has on."

"Calliope!" I said then, laughing. "I believe you would be a regular fashion plate, if you could afford it."

"I would," she gravely admitted, "I'm afraid I would. I love nice clothes and I just worship colors." She hesitated, looking at me with a manner of shyness. "Sit still a minute, will you?" she said, "I'd like to show you something."

She went upstairs and I listened to Hannah Hager, clattering kitchen things and singing:

> " He promised to buy me a bunch of blue ribbons,
> To tie up my bonny brown ha — ir."

Pink chambray and the love of blue ribbons and Miss Lydia Eider in her dress that was " dressmaker-made." These I turned in my mind, and I found myself thinking of my visit to the town in the next week, for which Madame Josephine was preparing; and of how certain elegancies are there officially recognized instead of being merely divined by the wistful amateur in color and textile. How Calliope and Hannah would have delighted, I thought idly, in the town's way of pretty things to wear, such as Josephine could make; the way that Lydia Eider knew, in her frocks that were " dressmaker-made." Indeed, Calliope and Hannah and Lydia Eider had been physically cast in the same mold of prettiness and of proportion, but only Lydia had come into her own.

And then Calliope came down, and she was bringing a long, white box. She sat before me with the box on her knee and I saw that she was flushing like a girl.

" I expect," she said, " you'll think I'm real worldly-minded. I dunno. Mebbe I am. But when I get out in company and see everybody wearing the dark shades like they do here in Friendship

so's their dresses won't show dirt, I declare I want to stand up and tell 'em: 'Colors! Colors! What'd the Lord put colors in the world for? Burn up your black and brown and gray and get into somethin' *happy*-colored, and see the difference it'll make in the way you feel inside.' I get so," Calliope said solemnly, "that when I put on my best black taffeta with the white turnovers, I declare I could slit it up the back seam. And I've felt that way a long time. And that's what made me —"

She fingered the white box and lifted the cover from a mass of tissue-paper.

"When Uncle Ezra Marsh died sixteen years ago last Summer," she said, "he left me a little bit of money — just a little dab, but enough to mend the wood-shed roof or buy a new cook-stove or do any of the useful things that's always staring you in the face. And I turned my back flat on every one of them. And I put the money in my pocket and went into the city. And there," said Calliope breathlessly, "I bought this."

She unwrapped it from its tissues, and it was yards and yards of lustrous, exquisite soft silk, colored rose-pink, and responding in folds almost tenderly to the hand that touched it.

"It's mine," Calliope said, "mine. My dress. And I haven't ever hed the sheer, moral courage to get it made up."

And that I could well understand. For though

Calliope's delicacy of figure and feature would have been well enough become by the soft pink, Friendship would have lifted its hands to see her so and she would instantly have been "talked about."

"Seems to me," Calliope said, smoothing the silk, "that if I could have on a dress like this I'd feel another kind of being — sort o' free and liberty-like. Of course," she added hurriedly, "I know well enough a pink dress ain't what-you-might-say important. But land, land, how I'd like one on me in company! Ain't it funny," she added, "in the city nobody'd think anything of my wearing it. In the city they sort of seem to know colors ain't wicked, so's they look nice. I use' to think," Calliope added, laughing a little, "I'd hev it made up and go to town and wear it on the street. All alone. Even if it was a black street. I guess you'll think I'm terrible foolish."

But with that the idea which had come to me vaguely and as an impossibility, took shape; and I poured it out to Calliope as a thing possible, desirable, inevitable.

"Calliope!" I said. "Bring the silk to my house. Let Madame Josephine make it up. And next week come with me to the city — for the opera. We will have a box — and afterward supper — and you shall wear the pink gown — and a long, black silk coat of mine —"

"You're fooling — you're *fooling!*" Calliope cried, trembling.

But I made her know how in earnest I was; for, indeed, on the instant my mind was made up that the thing must be, that the lonely pink dress must see the light and with it Calliope's shy hopes, long cherished. And so, before I left her, it was arranged. She had agreed to come next morning to my house, if Madame Josephine were willing, bringing the rose-pink silk.

"Me!" she said at last. "Why, me! Why, it's enough to make all the *me's* I've been turn over in their graves. And I guess they hev turned and come trooping out, young again."

Then, as she stood up, letting the soft stuff unwind and fall in shining abandon, we heard a little noise — tapping, insistent. It was very near to us — quite in the little passage; and as Calliope turned with the silk still in her arms the door swung back and there stood Grandma Hawley. She was leaning on her thick stick, and her gray lace cap was all awry and a mist of the fine, driving rain was on her gray hair.

"I got m' feet wet," she said querulously. "M' feet are wet. Lyddy's gone to Mis' Sykes's. I come back to stay a spell till it dries off some —"

"Grandma!" Calliope cried, hurrying to her, "I didn't hear you come in. I never heard you.

Come out by the kitchen fire and set your feet in the oven."

Calliope had tossed the silk on the table and had run to the old woman with outstretched hand; but the outstretched hand Grandma Hawley did not see. She stood still, looking by Calliope with a manner rather than an expression of questioning.

"What is't?" she asked, nodding direction.

Calliope understood, and she slightly lifted her brows and her thin shoulders, and seemed to glance at me.

"It's some pink for a dress, gramma," she said.

Grandma Hawley came a little nearer, and stood, a neat, bent figure in rusty black, looking down at the sumptuous, shining lengths. Then she laid her brown, veined hand upon the silk — and I remember now her fingers, being pricked and roughened by her constant needle, caught and rubbed on the soft stuff.

"My soul," she said, "it's pink silk."

She lifted her face to Calliope, the perpetual trembling of her head making her voice come tremulously.

"That's what Abe Hawley was always talkin' when I married him," she said. "'A pink silk dress fer ye, Minnie. A fine pink silk to set ye off,' s' 'e over an' over. I thought I was a-goin' to hev it. I hed the style all picked out in my head.

I know I use' to lay awake nights an' cut it out. But, time the cookin' things was paid for, the first baby come — an' then the other three to do for. An' Abe he didn't say pink silk after the fourth. But I use' to cut it out in the night, fer all that. I dunno but I cut it out yet, when I can't get to sleep an' my head feels bad. My head ain't right. It bothers me some, hummin' and ringin'. Las' night m' head —"

"There, there, gramma," said Calliope, and took her arm. "You come along with me and set your feet in the oven."

I had her other arm, and we turned toward the kitchen. And we were hushed as if we had heard some futile, unfulfilled wish of the dead still beating impotent wings.

In the kitchen doorway Hannah Hager was standing. She must have seen that glowing, heaped-up silk on the table, but it did not even hold her glance. For she had heard what Grandma Hawley had been saying, and it had touched her, who was so jealously devoted to the old woman, perhaps even more than it had touched Calliope and me.

"Miss Marsh, now," Hannah tried to say, "shall I put the butter that's left in the cookin'-butter jar?" And then her little features were caught here and there in the puckers of a very child's weeping, and she stood before us as a child might stand, crying softly without covering her face. She held out a

hand to the old woman, and Calliope and I let her lead her to the stove. My heart went out to the little maid for her tears and to Calliope for the sympathy in her eyes.

Grandma Hawley was talking on.

"I must 'a' got a little cold," she said plaintively. "It always settles in my head. My head's real bad. An' now I got m' feet wet —"

II

To Madame Josephine, the modiste who sometimes comes to me with her magic touch, transforming this and that, I confided something of my plans for Calliope, asked her if she would do what she could. Her kindly, emotional nature responded to the situation as to a kind of challenge.

"*Bien!*" she cried. "We shall see. You say she is slim — *petite* — with some little grace? *Bien!*"

So when, next day, Calliope arrived at my house with her parcel brought forth for the first time in sixteen years, she found madame and me both tiptoe with excitement. And from some bewildering plates madame explained how she would cut and suit and "correct" mademoiselle.

"The effect shall be long, slim, excellent. Soft folds from one's waist — so. From one's shoulder — so. A line of velvet here and here and down. *Bien!* Mademoiselle will look younger than ev-ery-

one! *If* mademoiselle would wave ze hair back a ver' little — so?" the French woman delicately advanced.

"Ma'moiselle," returned Calliope recklessly, "will do anything you want her to, short of a pink rose over one ear. My land, I never hed a dress before that I didn't hev to skimp the pattern and make it up less according to my taste than according to my cloth."

That day I sent to the city for a box at the opera. I chose "Faust," and smiled as I planned to sing the Jewel Song for Calliope before we went, and to laugh at her in her surprising rôle of Butterfly. "*Ah, je ris de me voir si belle.*" A lower proscenium box, a modest suite at a comfortable hotel, a little supper, a cab — I planned it all for the pleasure of watching her; and all this would, I knew, be given its significance by the wearing of the anomalous, rosy gown. And I loved Calliope for her weakness as we love the whip-poor-will for his little catching of the breath.

On the day that our tickets came Calliope appeared before me in some anxiety.

"Calliope," I said, without observing this, "our opera box is, so to speak, here."

But instead of the light in her face that I had expected:

"What night?" she abruptly demanded.

"For 'Faust,' on Wednesday," I told her.

And instead of her delight of which I had made sure:

"Will the six-ten express get us in the city too late?" she wanted to know.

And when I had agreed to the six-ten express:

"It's all right then," she said in relief. "They can hev it a little earlier and take the six-ten themselves instead of the accommodation. Hannah and Henry's going to get married a' Wednesday," she explained. "I hev to be here for that."

Then she told me of the simple plan for Hannah Hager's marriage to her good-looking giant. Naturally, Grandma Hawley could not think of "giving Hannah a wedding," so these poor little plans had been for some time wandering about unparented.

"*I* wanted," Calliope said, "she should be married in the church with Virginia creeper on the pew arms, civilized. But Hannah said that'd be putting on airs and she'd be so scairt she couldn't be solemn. Mis' Postmaster Sykes, she invited her real cordial to be married in her sitting-room, but Hannah spunked up and wouldn't. 'A sitting-room weddin',' s' she to me, private, ' 'd be like bein' baptized in the pantry. A parlor,' s' she, ' 's the only true place for a wedding. And I haven't no parlor, so we'll go to the minister's and stand up in *his* parlor. Do you think,' s' she to me, real pitiful, ' Henry can respec' me with no place to set m' foot in to be mar-

ried but jus' the public parsonage?' Poor little thing! Her wedding-dress is nothing but a last year's mull with a sprig in, either. And her traveling-dress to go to the city is her reg'lar brown Sunday suit."

"And they are going to the minister's?" I asked.

"Well, no," Calliope answered apologetically. "I asked them to be married at my house. I never thought about the opera when I done it. I never thought about anything but that poor child. I guess you'll think I'm real flighty. But I always think when two's married in the parsonage and the man pays the minister, it's like the bride is just the groom's guest at the cer'mony. And it ain't real dignified for her, seems though."

I knew well what this meant: That Calliope would have "asked in a few" and "stirred up" this and that delectable, and gone to no end of trouble and an expense which she could ill afford. Unless, as she was wont to say: "When it comes to doing for other people there ain't such a word as 'afford.' You just go ahead and do it and keep some rational yourself, and the *afford* 'll sort o' bloom out right, same's a rose."

So for Hannah, Calliope had caused things to "bloom right, same's a rose," as one knew by Hannah's happy face. On Tuesday she was helping at my house ("Brides always like extry money," Cal-

liope had advanced when I had questioned the propriety of asking her to iron on the day before her marriage) and, on going unexpectedly to the kitchen I came on Hannah with a patent flat-iron in one hand and a piece of beeswax in the other, and Henry, her good-looking giant, was there also and was frankly holding her in his arms. I liked him for his manly way when he saw me and most of all that he did not wholly release her but, with one arm about her, contrived a kind of bow to me. But it was Hannah who spoke.

"Oh, ma'am," she said shyly, "I *hope* you'll overlook. We've hed an awful time findin' any place to keep company, only walkin' 'round the high-school yard!"

My heart was still warm within me at the little scene as I went upstairs to see Calliope in her final fitting of the rose-pink gown, the work on which had gone on apace. And I own that, as I saw her standing before my long triple mirrors, I was amazed. The rosy gown suited the little body wonderfully and with her gray hair and delicate brightness of cheeks, she looked like some figure on a fan, exquisitely and picturesquely painted. The gown was, as Calliope had said that a gown should be, "all nice, slim lines and folds laid in in the right places, and little unexpected trimmings like you wouldn't think of having them if you wasn't real up in dress." It was a triumph for skillful madame,

who had wrought with her impressionable French heart as well as with her scissors.

Calliope laughed as she looked over-shoulder in the mirrors.

"My soul," she said, "I feel like a sparrow with a new pink tail! I declare, the dress looks more like Lyddy Eider herself than it looks like me. Do you think I look enough like me so's you'd sense it *was* me?"

"Mademoiselle," said Madame Josephine simply, "has a look of another world."

"I wish't I could see it on somebody," Calliope said wistfully; and since I was far too tall and madame not sufficiently "slendaire," Calliope cried:

"There's Hannah! She's downstairs helping, ain't she? Couldn't Hannah come upstairs a minute and put it on? We're most of a size!"

And indeed they were, as I had noted, cast in the same mold of proportion and prettiness.

So, with madame just leaving for the city, and I obliged to go down to the village, Calliope and Hannah Hager were left alone with the rose-pink silk gown, which fitted them both. Ought I not to have known what would happen?

And yet it came as a shock to me when, an hour later, as I passed Calliope's gate on my way home, she ran out and stood before me in some unusual excitement.

"Do they take back your opera boxes?" she demanded.

"No," I assured her, "they do not. Nor," I added suspiciously, "do folk take back their promises, you know, Calliope!"

"Well," she said miserably, "I expec' I've done wrong by you. The righter you try to do by some folks seems 's though the wronger it comes down on others. Oh," she cried, "I wish't I always knew what was right! But I can't go to the opera and I can't sit in the box. Yes, sir — I guess you'll think I'm real flighty and I dunno but what I am. But I've give my pink silk dress to Hannah Hager for her wedding. And I've lied some. I've said I meant she should hev it all along!"

III

The news that Calliope was to "give Hannah Hager a wedding" was received in Friendship with unaffected pleasure. Every one liked the tireless little thing, and those who could do so sent something to Calliope's house for a wedding-gift. These things Calliope jealously kept secret, intending not to let Hannah see them until the very hour of the ceremony. But when on Wednesday, some while before the appointed time, I went to the house, Calliope took me to the dining-room where the gifts were displayed.

"Some of 'em's real peculiar," she confided; "some

of 'em's what I call pick-up presents — things from 'round the house, you know. Mis' Postmaster Sykes she sent over the rug with the running dog on, and she's hed it in her parlor in a dark corner for years an' Hannah must have cleaned it many's the time. Mis' Holcomb-that-was-Mame-Bliss sent her old drop-leaf mahogany table, being she's got a new oak. The Liberty girls sent two of their chickens, live, for the wedding lunch, and I dassent to kill them — I'm real queer like that — so I hed to send for the groom, and he run up noon-hour and done it. And so on. But quite a few things are new — the granite iron and the drip coffee-pot and the sweeper 's all new. And did you hear what Gramma Hawley done? Drew five dollars of her burial money out of the savings bank and give it to Hannah right out. You know how Gramma fixed it — she had Zittelhof figger up her funeral expenses and she banked the sum, high and dry, and left herself just bare enough to live on coming in. But now she drew the five out and give Zittelhof to understand he'd hev to skimp some on her coffin. Hannah told me, crying like a child at the i-dee."

Calliope paused impressively, and shook her head at space.

" But wouldn't you have thought," she demanded, " that Lyddy Eider might have give Hannah a little something to wear? One of her old dresses for street would have sent Hannah cloud-high, and over.

I s'pose you heard what she did send? Mis' Postmaster Sykes run over to tell me. A man from the city come up by trolley sense noon to-day, bringing a rug from Lyddy. Well, of course a rug's a rug," Calliope admitted, "but it ain't a dress, seem's though. Hannah knows about Gramma's an' Lyddy's, but she don't know a word about the other presents. I do admire a surprise."

As for me, I, too, love a surprise. And that was why I had sent to the station a bag packed for both Calliope and me; and I meant, when the wedding guests should have gone, to take no denial, but to hurry Calliope into her "black grosgrain with the white turnovers," and with her to catch the six-ten express as we had planned aforetime. For pink silk might appear and disappear, but "Faust" would still be "Faust."

There were ten guests at Hannah's wedding, friends of hers and of Henry's, pleasantly excited, pleasantly abashed.

"And not one word do they know about the pink silk," Calliope whispered me. "Hannah's going to come with it on — I let her take my tan ulster to wear over her, walking through the streets, so. Do you know," she said earnestly, "if it wasn't for disappointing you I wouldn't feel anything but good about that dress?"

"Ah, well, I won't be disappointed," I prophesied confidently.

Grandma Hawley was last to arrive. And the little old woman was in some stress of excitement, talking incessantly and disconnectedly; but this we charged to the occasion.

"My head ain't right," she said. "It ain't been right for a while back — it hums and rings some. When I went in the room I thought it was my head the matter. I thought I didn't see right. But I did — I did, Hannah said I did. My head felt some better this mornin', an' that was there, just the same. I thought I'd be down flat on my back when I got m' feet wet, but I'd be all right if m' head wa'n't so bad. I must tell Hannah what I done. Why don't Hannah come?"

Hannah was, as a matter of fact, somewhat late at her wedding. We were all in some suspense when we saw her at last, hurrying up the street with Henry, who had gallantly called to escort her; and Calliope and I went to the door to meet her.

But when Hannah entered in Calliope's tan ulster buttoned closely about her throat, she was strangely quiet and somewhat pale and her eyes, I was certain, were red with weeping.

"Is Gramma here?" she asked at once, and, at our answer, merely turned to hurry upstairs where Calliope and I were to adjust the secret wedding-gown and fasten a pink rose in her hair. And, as we went, Henry added still further to our anxiety

by calling from the gay little crowd about him a distinctly soothing:

"Now, then. Now, then, Hannah!"

Up in Calliope's tiny chamber Hannah turned and faced us, still with that manner of suppressed and escaping excitement. And when we would have helped with the ulster she caught at its collar and held it about her throat as if, after all, she were half minded to depart from the place and let her good-looking giant be married alone.

"Oh, Miss Marsh, ma'am," she said, trembling, "oh, Miss Marsh. I can't dare tell you what I done."

With that she broke down and cried, and Calliope promptly took her in her arms, as I think that she would have liked to take the whole grieving world. And now, as she soothed her, she began gently to unbutton the tan ulster, and Hannah let her take it off. But even the poor child's tears had not prepared us for what was revealed.

Hannah had come to her wedding wearing, not the rose-pink silk, but the last year's mull "with the sprig in."

"Well, sir!" cried Calliope blankly. "Well, Hannah Hager —"

The little maid sat on the foot of the bed, sobbing.

"Oh, Miss Marsh, ma'am," she said, "you know — don't you know, ma'am? — how I was so glad

about the dress you give me't I was as weak as a cat all over me. All las' night in the evenin' I was like a trance an' couldn't get my supper down, an' all. An' Gramma, she was over to Mis' Sykes's to supper an' hadn't seen it. An' Gramma an' I sleep together, an' I went an' spread the dress on the bed, an' I set side of it till Henry come. An' I l-left it there to hev him go in an' l-look at it. An' we was in the kitchen a minute or two first. An' nex' we knew, Gramma, she stood in the inside door. An' I thought she was out of her head she was so wild-like an' laughin' an' cryin'. An' she set down on a chair, an' s' she: 'He's done it. He's done it. He's kep' his word. Look — look on my bed,' s' she, 'an' see if I ain't seen it right. Abe Hawley,' s' she, 'he's sent me my pink silk dress he wanted to, out o' the grave!'"

Hannah's thin, rough little hands were clinched on her knee and her eyes searched Calliope's face.

"Oh, Miss Marsh, ma'am," she said, "she was like one possessed, beggin' me to look at it an' tell her if it wasn't so. She thought mebbe it might be her head. So I went an' told her the dress was hers," the little maid sobbed. "I was scairt she'd make herself sick takin' on so. An' after*wards* I couldn't a-bear to tell her any different. Ma'am, if you could 'a' seen her! She took her rocker an' set by the bed all hours, kind o' gentlin' the silk with her hands. An' she wouldn't go to bed an'

disturb it off, an' I slep' on the dinin'-room lounge with the shawl over me. An' this m-mornin' she went on just the same. An' after dinner Lyddy sent a man from town with a rug for me, an' I set on the back stoop so's not to see him, I was cryin' so. An' when I come in Gramma hed shut the bedroom door an' gone. I couldn't trust me even to l-look in the bedroom for fear I'd put it on. An' I couldn't take it away from her — I couldn't. Not with all she's done for me, an' the five dollars an' all. Oh, Miss Marsh, ma'am —" Hannah ended helplessly.

It seemed to me that I had never known Calliope until that moment.

" Gracious," she said to Hannah calmly, " crying that way for a little pink silk dress, and Henry waiting for you downstairs! Wipe up your eyes this instant minute, Hannah, and get to ' I will '! "

I think that this attitude of Calliope's must have tranquillized the wildest. In spite of the reality of the tragedy, it was no time at all until, having put the pink rose in Hannah's hair, anyway, Calliope and I led the little bride downstairs. For was there not a reality of happiness down there?

" After all, Henry was marrying you and not the dress, you know," Calliope reminded her on the landing.

" That's what he keeps a-sayin'," consented Hannah with a wan little smile, " but oh, ma'am —" she added, for Hannah was all feminine.

And when the "I will" had been said, I loved the little creature for taking Grandma Hawley in her arms.

"Did they tell you what I done?" the old woman questioned anxiously when Hannah kissed her. "I was savin' it to tell you, an' it went out o' my head. An' I dunno — did you know what I done?" she persisted.

But the others crowded forward with congratulation and, as was their fashion, with teasing; and presently I think that even the rosy gown was forgotten in Hannah's delight over her unexpected gifts. The graniteware, the sweeper, the rug with the running dog — after all, was ever any one so blessed?

And as I watched them — Hannah and her great, good-looking adoring giant — I who, like Calliope, love a surprise, caught a certain plan by its shining wings and held it close. They say that when one does this such wings bear one away — and so it proved.

I found my chance and whispered my plan to Hannah, half for the pastime of seeing the quickening color in her cheek and the light in her eyes. Then I told the giant, chiefly for the sake of noting how some mischievous god smote him with a plague of blushes. And they both consented — and that is the way when one clings to the wings of a plan.

So it came about that in the happy bustle of the parting, as Hannah in her "regular brown Sunday

suit" went away on Henry's arm, they two and I exchanged glances of pleasant significance. Then, when every one had gone, I turned to Calliope with authority.

"Put on," I bade her, "your black grosgrain silk with the white turnovers — and mind you don't slit it up the back seam!"

"I'm a-goin' to do my dishes up," said Calliope. "Can't you set a spell and talk it over?"

"Hurry," I commanded, "or we shall miss the six-ten express!"

"What do you mean?" she asked in alarm.

"Leave everything," said I. "There's a box waiting for us at the opera to-night. And supper afterward."

"You ain't —" she said tremulously.

"I am," I assured her firmly, "and so are you. And Hannah and Henry are going with us. Hurry!"

IV

"He promised to buy me a bunch of blue ribbons"

is, in effect, the spirit of the *"Ah, je ris de me voir si belle"* of "Marguerite" when she opens the casket of jewels. As we sat, the four of us, in the dimness of the opera box — Calliope in her black silk with the white turnovers, Hannah in her "regular brown Sunday suit," and Henry and I, it seemed to me that Marguerite's song was really concerning

the delight of rose-pink silk. And I found myself grieving anew for the innocent hopes that had been dissolved, immaterial as Abe Hawley's message from the grave.

Then the curtain fell on the third act and the soft thunder of applause spent itself and the lights leaped up. And immediately I was aware of a conspicuously high-pitched voice at the door of the box, a voice which carried with it some consciousness of elaborate self-possession.

"Really!" said the voice. "Of all people! My dear Hannah — and Calliope Marsh! You butterflies —"

I looked up, and at first all that I saw was a gown which "laid smooth down — and then all to once it'd slimpse into folds, soft as soft — and didn't pucker nor skew nor hang wrong"; a gown that was "dressmaker made"; a gown, in short, such as Lydia Eider "always hed on." And there beside us stood Lydia Eider herself, wearing some exquisite, priceless thing of pink chiffon and old lace, with a floating, glittering scarf on her arms.

I remember that she seemed some splendid, tropic bird alight among our nun-like raiment. A man or two, idling attendance, were rapidly and perfunctorily presented to us — one, who was Lydia's adopted brother, showing an amused cordiality to Henry. And I saw how the glasses were instantly turned from pit and boxes toward her — this girl

who, with Calliope and Hannah, had been cast in one mold of prettiness and proportion and who alone of the three, as I thought, had come into her own.

And Lydia said:

"*Will* you tell me how on earth Grandma Hawley came to send me a pink silk dress to-day? You didn't know! But she did — on my honor. It came this afternoon by the man I sent out to you, Hannah. And so decently made — how can it have happened? Made for me too — positively I can wear it — though nearly everything I have is pink. But how *did* Grandma come to do it? And *where* did she get it? And why —"

She talked on for a little, elaborating, wondering. But I fancy that she must have thought us uncommonly stupid, for none of us had the faintest suggestion to offer. We listened, and murmured a bit about the health of Grandma Hawley, and Henry said some hesitating thanks, in which Hannah barely joined, for the wedding gift of the rug, but none of us gave evidence. And at last, with some gracious word, Lydia Eider left the box, trailing her pink chiffon skirts and saying the slight good-by which utterly forgets one.

But when she had gone, Calliope laughed, softly and ambiguously and wholly contagiously, so that Hannah, whose face had begun to pucker like a child's, unwillingly joined her. And then, partly because of Henry's reassuring, "Now then, now

then, Hannah," and partly at the touch of his big hand and in the particular, delicious embarrassment which comes but once, Hannah tremulously spoke her conclusion:

"I don't care," she said, "I don't care! I'm *glad* — for Gramma."

Calliope sat smiling, looking, in her delicate color and frailty and the black and white of her dress, like some one on a fan, exquisitely and appropriately painted.

"I was thinking," she said brightly to Hannah, "going without a thing is some like a jumping tooth. It hurts you before-hand, but when it's gone for good all the hurt sort of eases down and peters out and can't do you any more harm."

But I think they both knew that this was not all. For some way, outside the errantry of prettiness and proportion, Calliope and Hannah too had come into their own.

I looked at Calliope, her face faintly flushed by the unwonted hour; at Hannah, rosy little bride; and at her adoring giant over whom some god had cast the usual spell of wedding blushes.

Verily, I thought, would not one say there is rose pink enough in the world for us all?

As the curtain rose again Calliope leaned toward me. "I don't believe any dress," she said, "pink silk or any other kind, ever dressed up so many folks's souls!"

PEACE [1]

WHEN they went to South America for six months, the Henslows, that live across the street from me, wanted to rent their cottage. And of course, being a neighbor, I wanted them to get the fifteen dollars a month. But — being the cottage was my neighbor — I couldn't help, deep down in my inner head, feeling kind of selfish pleased that it stood vacant a while. It's a chore to have a new neighbor in the summer. They always want to borrow your rubber fruit-rings, and they forget to return some; and they come in and sit in the mornings when you want to get your work out of the way before the hot part of a hot day crashes down on you. I can neighbor agreeable when the snow flies, but summers I want my porch and my rocker and my wrapper and my palm-leaf fan, and nobody to call on. And — I don't want to sound less neighborly than I mean to sound — I don't want any real danger of being what you might say called-on — not till the cool of the day.

Then, on a glorious summer morning, right out of a clear blue sky, what did I see but two trunks

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plopped down on the Henslows' porch! I knew they were never back so soon. I knew the two trunks meant renters, and nothing but renters.

"I'll bet ten hundred thousand dollars one of them plays the flute and practices evenings," I says.

I didn't catch sight of them till the next morning, and then I saw him head for the early train into the city, and her stand at the gate and watch him. And, my land, she was in a white dress and she didn't look twenty years old.

So I went right straight over.

"My dear," I says, "I dunno what your name is, but I'm your neighbor, and I dunno what more we need than that."

She put out her hand — just exactly as if she was glad. She had a wonderful sweet, loving smile — and she smiled with that.

So I says: "I thought moving in here with trunks, so, you might want something. And if I can let you have anything — jars or jelly-glasses or rubber rings or whatever, why, just you —"

"Thank you, Miss Marsh," she says. "I know you're Miss Marsh — Mrs. Henslow told me about you."

"The same," says I, neat.

"I'm Mrs. Harry Beecher," she says. "I — we were just married last week," she says, neat as a biography.

"So you was!" I says. "Well, now, you just

let me be to you what your folks would want m to be, won't you?" says I. "Feel," I says, "just like you could run in over to my house any time, morning, noon or night. Call on me for anything. Come on over and sit with me if you feel lonesome — or if you don't. My side porch is real nice and cool and shady all the afternoon —"

And so on. And wasn't that nice to happen to me, right in the middle of the dead of summer, with nothing going on?

If you have lived in the immediate neighborhood of a bride and groom, you know what I am going to tell about.

But if you haven't, try to rent your next house — if you rent — or try to buy your next home — if you buy — somewhere in the more-or-less neighborhood of a bride and groom. Because it's an education. It's an education in living. No — I don't believe I mean that the way you think I mean it at all. I mean it another way.

To be sure, there were the mornings, when I saw them come out from breakfast and steal a minute or two hanging round the veranda before he had to start off. That was as nice as a picture, and nicer. I got so I timed my breakfast so's I could be watering my flower-beds when this happened, and not miss it. He usually pulled the vines over better, or weeded a little near the step, or tinkered with the hinge of the screen, or fussed with the bricks where

the roots had pushed them up. And she sat on the steps and talked with him, and laughed now and then with her little pretty laugh. (Not many women can laugh as pretty as she did — and we all ought to be able to do it. Sometimes I wish somebody would start a school to teach pretty laughing, and somebody else would make us all go to it.) And I knew how they were pretending that this was really their own home, and playing proprietor and householder, just like everybody else. And of course that was pleasurable to me to see — but that wasn't what I meant.

Nor I didn't mean times when she'd be out in the garden during the day, and the telephone bell would ring, and she would throw things and head for the house, running, because she thought it might be him calling her up from the city. Most usually it was. I always knew it had been him when she came back singing.

And then there were the late afternoons, say, almost an hour before the first train that he could possibly come on and that now and then he caught. Always before it was time for that she would open her front door that she'd had closed all day to keep her house cool, and she'd bring her book or her sewing out on the porch, and never pay a bit of attention to either, because she sat looking up the street. There was only a little bit of shade on her porch that time in the afternoon, and I used to want to ask

her to come over on my cool, shady side porch, but I had the sense not to. I sort of understood how she liked to sit out there where she was, on their own porch, waiting for him. Then he'd come, and she'd sit out in the garden and read to him while he dug in the beds, or she'd sew on the porch while he cut the grass — well, now, it don't sound like much as I tell it, does it? — and yet it used to look wonderful sweet to me, looking across the street.

But as I said, it wasn't any of these times, nor yet the long summer evenings when I could just see the glimmer of her white dress on the porch or in the garden, or their shadows on the curtain, rainy evenings; no, it wasn't these times that made me wish for everybody in the world that they lived next door to a bride and groom. But the thing I mean came to me all of a sudden, when they hadn't been my neighbors for a week. And it came to me like this:

One night I'd had them over for supper. It had been a hot day, and ordinarily I'm opposed to company on a hot day; but some way having *them* was different. And then I didn't imagine she was so very used to cooking, and I got to thinking maybe a meal away from home would be a rest.

And after supper we'd been walking around my yard, looking at my late cosmos and wondering whether it would get around to bloom before the frost. And they had been telling me how they meant

to plant their garden when they got one of their own. I liked to keep them talking about it, because his face lit up so young and boyish, and hers got all soft and bright; and they looked at each other like they could see that garden planted and up and growing and pretty near paid for. So I kept egging them on, asking this and that, just to hear them plan.

"One whole side of the wall," said he, "we'll have lilacs and forsythia."

She looked at him. "I thought we said hollyhocks there," she said.

"Well, don't you remember," he said, "we changed that when you said you'd planned, ever since you were a little girl to have lilacs and forsythia on the edge of your garden?"

"Well — so I did," she remembered. "But I thought you said you liked hollyhocks best?"

"Maybe I did," says he. "I forget. I don't know but I did for a while. But I think of it this way now."

She laughed. "Why," she said, "I was getting to *prefer* hollyhocks."

I noticed that particular. Then we came round the corner of the house. And the street looked so peaceful and lovely that I knew just how he felt when he said:

"Let's us three go and take a drive in the country. Can't we? We could get a carriage somewhere, couldn't we?"

And she says like a little girl, "Oh, yes, let's. But don't you s'pose we could rent a car here from somebody?"

I liked to look at his look when he looked at her. He done it now.

"A car?" he said. "But you're nervous when I drive. Wouldn't you rather have a horse?"

"Well, but you'd rather have a car," she said. "And I'd like to know you were liking that best! And, truly, I don't think I'd care much — now."

Then I took a hand. "You look here," I says. "I'd really ought to step down to Mis' Merriman's to a committee meeting. I've been trying to make myself believe I didn't need to go, but I know I ought to. And you two take your drive."

They fussed a little, but that was the way we arranged it. I went off to my meeting before I saw which they did get to go in. But that didn't make any difference. All the way to the meeting I kept thinking about lilacs and hollyhocks and horses and cars. And I saw what had happened to those two: they loved each other so much that they'd kind of lost track of the little things that they thought had mattered so much, and neither could very well remember which they had really had a leaning towards of all the things.

"It's a kind of *each-otherness!*" I says to myself. "It's a new thing. That ain't giving-upness. Giv-

ing-upness is when you still want what you give up. This is something else. It's each-otherness. And you can't get it till you *care*."

But then I thought of something else. It wasn't only them — it was me! It was like I had caught something from them. For of course I'd rather have gone driving with those two than to have gone to any committee meeting, necessary or not. But I knew now that I'd been feeling inside me that of course they didn't want an old thing like me along, and that of course they'd rather have their drive alone, horse *or* automobile. And so I'd kind of backed out according. Being with them had made me feel a sort of each-otherness too. It was wonderful. I thought about it a good deal.

And when I came home and see that they'd got back first, and were sitting on the porch with no lights in the house yet, except the one burning dim in the hall, I sat upstairs by my window quite a while. And I says to myself:

"If only there was a bride and groom in every single house all up and down the streets of the village —"

And I could almost think how it would be with everybody being decent to each other and to the rest, just sheer because they were all happy.

Picture how I felt, then, when not six weeks later, on a morning all yellow and blue and green, and tied onto itself with flowers, little Mrs. Bride came

standing at my side door, knocking on the screen, and her face all tear-stained.

"Gracious, now," I says, "did breakfast burn?"

She came in. She always wore white dresses and little doll caps in the morning, and she sit down at the end of my dining-room table, looking like a rose-bud in trouble.

"Oh, Miss Marsh," she says, "it isn't any laughing matter. Something's happened between us. We've spoke cross to each other."

"Well, well," I says, "what was that for?"

I s'posed maybe he'd criticized the popovers, or something equally universal had occurred.

"*That* was it," she says. "We've spoke cross to each other, Miss Marsh."

And then it came to me that it didn't seem to be bothering her at all what it was about. The only thing that stuck out for her was that they'd spoke cross to each other.

"So!" I says. "And you've got to wait all day long before you can patch it up. Why don't you call him up?" I ask her. "It's only twenty cents for the three minutes — and you can get it all in that."

She shook her head. "That's the worst of it," she says. "I can't do it. Neither can he. I'm not that sort — to be able to give in after I've been mad and spoke harsh. I'm — I'm afraid neither of us will, even when he gets home."

Then I sat up straight. This, I see, was serious — most as serious as she thought.

"What's the reason?" says I.

"I dunno," she says. "We're like that — both of us. We're awful proud — no matter how much we want to give in, we can't."

I sat looking at her.

"Call him up," I says.

She shook her head again and made her pretty mouth all tight.

"I couldn't," she says. "I couldn't."

She seemed to like to sit and talk it over, kind of luxurious. She told me how it began — some two-penny thing about screens in the parlor window. She told me how one thing led to another. I let her talk and I sat there thinking. Pretty soon she went home and she never sung once all day. It didn't seem as if anybody's screens were worth that.

I'm not one that's ashamed of looking at anything I'm interested in. When it came time for the folks from the afternoon local, I sat down in my parlor behind the Nottinghams. I saw she never came out to the gate. And when he came home I could see her white dress out in the back garden where she was pretending to work.

He sat down on the front porch and smoked, and seemed to read the paper. She came in the house after a while, and finally she appeared in the front door for three-fourths of a second.

"Your supper's ready for you," I heard her say. And then I knew, certain sure, how they were both sitting there at their table not speaking a word.

I ate my own supper, and I felt like a funeral was going on. It kills something in me to have young folks, or any folks, act like that. And when I went back in the parlor I saw him on the front porch again, smoking, and her on the side porch playing with the kitten.

"It's the first death," I says. "It's their first kind of death. And I can't stand it a minute longer."

So when I saw him start out pretty soon to go downtown alone — I went to my front gate and I called to him to come over. He came — a fine, close-knit chap he was, with the young not rubbed out of his face yet, and his eyes window-clear.

"The catch on my closet-door don't act right," I says. "I wonder if you'll fix it for me?"

He went up and done it, and I ran for the tools for him and tried to get my courage up. When he got through and came down I was sitting on my hall-tree.

"Mr. Groom," I says — that was my name for him —"I hope you won't think I'm interfering *too* much, but I want to speak to you serious about your wife."

"Yes," he says, short.

I went on, never noticing: "I dunno whether

you've took it in, but there seems to be something wrong with her."

"Wrong with her?" he says.

"Yes, sir," I says. "And I dunno but awfully wrong. I've been noticing lately." (I didn't say *how* lately.)

"What do you mean?" says he, and sat down on the bottom step.

"Don't you see," I says, "that she don't look well? She don't act no more like herself than I do. She hasn't," says I, truthful, "half the spirit to her to-day that she had when you first came here to the village."

"Why — no," he says, "I hadn't noticed —"

"You wouldn't," says I. "You wouldn't be likely to. But it seems to me that you ought to be warned — and be on your guard."

"*Warned!*" he says, and I saw him get pale — I tell you I saw him get pale.

"I'm not easy alarmed," I told him. "And when I see anything serious, it ain't in my power to stand aside and not say anything."

"Serious," he says over. "Serious? But, Miss Marsh, can you give me any idea —"

"I've give you a hint," says I, "that it's something you'd ought to be mighty careful about. I dunno's I can do much more; I dunno's I ought to do that. But if anything should happen —"

"Good heavens!" he says. "You don't think she's that bad off?"

"— if anything should happen," I went on, calm, "I didn't want to have myself to blame for not having spoke up in time. Now," says I, brisk, "you were just going downtown. And I've got a taste of jell I want to take over to her. So I won't keep you."

He got up, looking so near like a tree that's had its roots hacked at that I 'most could have told him that I didn't mean the kind of death he was thinking of at all. But I didn't say anything more. And he thanked me, humble and grateful and scared, and went off downtown. He looked over to the cottage, though, when he shut my gate — I noticed that. She wasn't anywhere in sight. Nor she wasn't when I stepped up onto her porch in a minute or two with a cup-plate of my new quince jell that I wanted her to try.

"Hello," I says in the passage. "Anybody home?"

There was a little shuffle and she came out of the dining-room. There was a mark all acrost her cheek, and I judged she'd been lying on the couch out there crying.

"Get a teaspoon," says I, "and come taste my new receipt."

She came, lack-luster, and like jell didn't make

much more difference than anything else. We sat down, cozy, in the hammock, me acting like I'd forgot everything in the world about what had gone before. I rattled on about the new way to make my jell and then I set the sample on the sill behind the shutter and I says:

"I just had Mr. Groom come over to fix the latch on my closet-door. I dunno what was wrong with it — when I shut it tight it went off like a gun in the middle of the night. Mr. Groom fixed it in just a minute."

"Oh, he did," says she, about like that.

"He's awful handy with tools," I says. And she didn't say anything. And then says I:

"Mrs. Bride, we're old friends by now, ain't we?"

"Why, yes," says she, "and good friends, I hope."

"That's what I hope," I says. "And now," I went on, "I hope you won't think I'm interfering too much, but I want to speak to you serious about your husband."

"My husband?" says she, short.

I went on, never noticing. "I don't know whether you've took it in, but there seems to be something wrong with him."

"What do you mean?" she says, looking at me.

"Well, sir," I says, "I ain't sure. I can't tell just how wrong it is. But something is ailing him."

" Why, I haven't noticed anything," she says, and come over to a chair nearer to me.

" You don't mean," I says, " that you don't notice the change there's been in him? "— I didn't say in how long —" the lines in his face and how different he acts? "

" Oh, no," she says. " Why, surely not! "

" Surely *yes,*" says I. " It strikes me — it struck me over there to-night — that something is the matter — *serious.*"

" Oh, don't say that," she says. " You frighten me."

" I'm sorry for that," says I. " But it's better to be frightened too soon than too late. And if anything should happen I wouldn't want to think —"

" Oh! " she says, sharp, " what do you think could happen? "

"— I wouldn't want to think," I went on, " that I had suspicioned and hadn't warned you."

" But what can I do —" she began.

" You can watch out," I says, " now that you know. Folks get careless about their near and dear — that's all. They don't notice that anything's the matter till it's too late."

" Oh, dear! " she says. " Oh, if anything should happen to Harry, why, Miss Marsh —"

" Exactly," says I.

We talked on a little while till I heard what I was waiting for — him coming up the street. I

noticed that he hadn't been gone downtown long enough to buy a match.

"I'm going over to Miss Matey's for some pie-plant," I says. "Her second crop is on. Can I go through your back gate? Maybe I'll come back this way."

When I went around their house I saw that she was still standing on the porch and he was coming in the gate. And I never looked back at all — bad as I wanted to.

It was deep dusk when I came back. The air was as gentle as somebody that likes you when they're liking you most.

When I came by the end of the porch I heard voices, so I knew that they were talking. And then I caught just one sentence. You'd think I could have been contented to slip through the front yard and leave them to work it out. But I wasn't. In fact I'd only just got the stage set ready for what I meant to do.

I walked up the steps and laid my pie-plant on the stoop.

"I'm coming in," I says.

They got up and said the different things usual. And I went and sat down.

"You'll think in a minute," says I, "that I owe you both an apology. But I don't."

"What for, dear?" Mrs. Bride says, and took my hand.

I'm an old woman and I felt like their mother and their grandmother. But I felt a little frightened too.

" Is either of you sick? " I says.

Both of them says: " No, *I* ain't." And both of them looked furtive and quick at the other.

" Well," I says, " mebbe you don't know it. But to-day both of you has had the symptoms of coming down with something. Something serious."

They looked at me, puzzled.

" I noticed it in Mrs. Bride this morning," I says, " when she came over to my house. She looked white, and like all the life had gone out of her. And she didn't sing once all day, nor do any work. Then I noticed it in you to-night," I says to him, " when you walked looking down, and came acrost the street lack-luster, and like nothing mattered so much as it might have if it had mattered more. And so I done the natural thing. I told each of you about something being the matter with the other one. Something serious."

I stood up in front of them, and I dunno but I felt like a fairy godmother that had something to give them — something priceless.

" When two folks," I says, " speak cross to each other and can't give in, it's just as sure a disease as — as quinsy. And it'll be fatal, same as a fever can be. You can hate the sight of me if you want to, but that's why I spoke out like I done."

I didn't dare look at them. I began just there to see what an awful thing I *had* done, and how they were perfectly bound to take it. But I thought I'd get in as much as I could before they ordered me off the porch.

" I've loved seeing you over here," I says. " It's made me young again. I've loved watching you say good-by in the mornings, and meet again evenings. I've loved looking out over here to the light when you sat reading, and I could see your shadows go acrost the curtains sometimes, when I sat rocking in my house by myself. It's all been something I've liked to know was happening. It seemed as if a beautiful, new thing was beginning in the world — and you were it."

All at once I got kind of mad at the two of them.

" And here for a little tinkering matter about screens for the parlor, you go and spoil all my fun by not speaking to each other! " I scolded, sharp.

It was that, I think, that turned the tide and made them laugh. They both did laugh, hearty — and they looked at each other and laughed — I noticed that. For two folks can *not* look at each other and laugh and stay mad same time. They can *not* do it.

I went right on: " So," I says, " I told you each the truth, that the other one was sick. So you were, both of you. Sick at heart. And you know it."

He put out his hand to her.

"I know it," he says.

"I know too," says she.

"Land!" says I, "you done that awful pretty. If I could give in that graceful about anything I'd go round giving in whether I'd said anything to be sorry for or not. I'd do it for a parlor trick."

"Was it hard, dear?" he says to her. And she put up her face to him just as if I hadn't been there. I liked that. And it made me feel as much at home as the clock.

He looked hard at me.

"Truly," he says, "didn't you mean she looked bad?"

"I meant just what I said," says I. "She did look bad. But she don't now."

"And you made it all up," she says, "about something serious being the matter with him —"

"Made it up!" says I. "No! But what ailed him this morning doesn't ail him now. That's all. I s'pose you're both mad at me," I says, mournful.

He took a deep breath. "Not when I'm as thankful as this," he says.

"And me," she says. "And me."

I looked around the little garden of the Henslows' cottage, with the moon behaving as if everything was going as smooth as glass — don't you always notice that about the moon? What grand

manners it's got? It never lets on that anything is the matter.

He threw his arm across her shoulder in that gesture of comradeship that is most the sweetest thing they do.

They got up and came over to me quick.

"We can't thank you —" she says.

"Shucks," I says. "I been wishing I had something to give you. I couldn't think of anything but vegetables. Now mebbe I've give you something after all — providing you don't go and forget it the very next time," I says, wanting to scold them again.

They walked to the gate with me. The night was black and pale gold, like a great soft drowsy bee.

"You know," I says, when I left them, "peace that we talk so much about — that isn't going to come just by governments getting it. If people like you and me can't keep it — and be it — what hope is there for the nations? We *are* 'em!"

I'd never thought of it before. I went home saying it over. When I'd put my pie-plant down cellar I went in my dark little parlor and sat down by the window and rocked. I could see their light for a little while. Then it went out. The cottage lay in that hush of peace of a hot summer night. I could feel the peacefulness of the village.

"If only we can get enough of it," I says. "If only we can get enough of it —"

DREAM

WHEN a house in the neighborhood has been vacant for two years, and all of a sudden the neighborhood sees furniture being moved into that house, excitement, as Silas Sykes says, reigns supreme and more than supreme.

And so it did in Friendship Village when the Oldmoxon House got a new tenant, unbeknownst. The excitement was specially strained because the reason Oldmoxon House had stood vacant so long was the rent. And whoever had agreed to the Twenty Dollars was going to be, we all felt, and as Mis' Sykes herself put it, "a distinct addition to Friendship Village society."

It was she gave me the news, being the Sykeses are the Oldmoxon House's nearest neighbors. I hurried right over to her house — it was summer-warm and you just ached for an excuse to be out in it, anyway. We drew some rockers onto her front porch where we could get a good view. The Oldmoxon double front doors stood open, and the things were being set inside.

"Serves me right not to know who it is," says Mis' Sykes. "I see men working there yesterday,

and I never went over to inquire what they were doing."

"A body can't do everything that's expected of them," says I, soothing.

"Won't it be nice," says Mis' Sykes, dreamy, "to have that house open again, and folks going and coming, and maybe parties?" It was then the piano came out of the van, and she gave her ultimatum. "Whoever it is," she says, pointing eloquent, "will be a distinct addition to Friendship Village society."

There wasn't a soul in sight that seemed to be doing the directing, so pretty soon Mis' Sykes says, uneasy:

"I don't know — would it seem — how would it be — well, wouldn't it be taking a neighborly interest to step over and question the vans a little?"

And we both of us thought it would be in order, so we did step right over to inquire.

Being the vans had come out from the City, we didn't find out much except our new neighbor's name: Burton Fernandez.

"The Burton Fernandezes," says Mis' Sykes, as we picked our way back. "I guess when we write that name to our friends in our letters, they won't think we live in the woods any more. Calliope," she says, "it come to me this: Don't you think it would be real nice to get them up a reception-surprise, and all go there some night as soon as they get settled, and take our own refreshments, and get ac-

quainted all at once, instead of using up time to call, individual?"

"Land, yes," I says, "I'd like to do that to every neighbor that comes into town. But you —" says I, hesitating, to her that was usually so exclusive she counted folks's grand-folks on her fingers before she would go to call on them, "what makes you —"

"Oh," says Mis' Sykes, "you can't tell me. Folks's individualities is expressed in folks's furniture. You can't tell me that, with those belongings, we can go wrong in our judgment."

"Well," I says, "*I* can't go wrong, because I can't think of anything that'd make me give them the cold shoulder. That's another comfort about being friends to everybody — you don't have to decide which ones you want to know."

"You're so queer, Calliope," says Mis' Sykes, tolerant. "You miss all the satisfaction of being exclusive. And you can't *afford* not to be."

"Mebbe not," says I, "mebbe not. But I'm willing to try it. Hang the expense!" says I.

Mis' Sykes didn't waste a day on her reception-surprise. I heard of it right off from Mis' Holcomb and Mis' Toplady and two-three more. They were all willing enough, not only because any excitement in the village is like a personal present to all of us, but because Mis' Sykes was interested. She's got a real gift for making folks think her way is the way. She's a real leader. Everybody wears a

straw hat contented till, somewheres near November, Mis' Sykes flams out in felt, and then you begin right off to feel shabby in your straw, though new from the store that Spring.

"It does seem like rushing things a little, though," says Mis' Holcomb to me, very confidential, the next day.

"Not for me," I says. "I been vaccinated."

"What do you mean?" says she.

"Not even the small-pox can make me snub them," I explains.

"Yes, but Calliope," says Mis' Toplady in a whisper, "suppose it should turn out to be one of them awful places we read about. They have good furniture."

"Well," says I, "in that case, if thirty to forty of us went in with our baskets, real friendly, and done it often enough, I bet we'd either drive them out or turn them into better neighbors. Where's the harm?"

"Calliope," says Mame Holcomb, "don't you draw the line *nowheres?*"

"Yes," I says, mournful. "Them on Mars won't speak to me — yet. But short of Mars — no. I have no lines up."

We heard from the servant that came down on Tuesday and began cleaning and settling, that the family would arrive on Friday. We didn't get much out of him — a respectable-seeming colored man but

reticent, very. The fact that the family servant was a man finished Mis' Sykes. She had had a strong leaning, but now she was bent, visible. And with an item that appeared Thursday night in the Friendship Village *Evening Daily,* she toppled complete.

" Professor and Mrs. Burton Fernandez," the *Supper Table Jottings* said, " are expected Friday to take possession of Oldmoxon House, 506 Daphne street. Professor Fernandez is to be engaged for some time in some academic and scholastic work in the City. Welcome, Neighbors."

" Let's have our reception-surprise for them Saturday night," says Mis' Sykes, as soon as she had read the item. " Then we can make them right at home, first thing, and they won't need to tramp into church, feeling strange, Next-day morning."

" Go on — do it," says I, affable.

Mis' Sykes ain't one to initiate civic, but she's the one to initiate festive, every time.

Mis' Holcomb and Mis' Toplady and me agreed to bake the cakes, and Mis' Sykes was to furnish the lemonade, being her husband keeps the Post-office store, and what she gets, she gets wholesale. And Mis' Sykes let it be known around that on Saturday night we were all to drop into her house, and go across the street together, with our baskets, to put in a couple of hours at our new neighbors', and make them feel at home. And everybody was looking forward to it.

I've got some hyacinth bulbs along by my side fence that get up and come out, late April and early May, and all but speak to you. And it happened when I woke up Friday morning they looked so lovely, I couldn't resist them. I had to take some of them up, and set them out in pots and carry them around to a few. About noon I was going along the street with one to take to an old colored washerwoman I know, that never does see much that's beautiful but the sky; but when I got in front of Oldmoxon House, a thought met me.

"To-day's the day they come," I said to myself. "Be kind of nice to have a sprig of something there to welcome them."

So my feet turned me right in, like your feet do sometimes, and I rang the front bell.

"Here," says I, to that colored servant that opened the door, "is a posy I thought your folks might like to see waiting for them."

He started to speak, but somebody else spoke first.

"How friendly!" said a nice-soft voice — I noticed the voice particular. "Let me thank her."

There came out from the shadow of the hall, a woman — the one with the lovely voice.

"I am Mrs. Fernandez — this is good of you," she said, and put out her hands for the plant.

I gave it to her, and I don't believe I looked surprised, any more than when I first saw the pictures

of the Disciples, that the artist had painted their skin dark, like it must have been. Mrs. Fernandez was dark too. But her people had come, not from Asia, but from Africa.

Like a flash, I saw what this was going to mean in the village. And in the second that I stood there, without time to think it through, something told me to go in, and try to get some idea of what was going to be what.

" May I come inside now I'm here? " I says.

She took me into the room that was the most settled of any. The piano was there, and a good many books on their shelves. As I remember back now, I must just have stood and stared at them, for impressions were chasing each other across my head like waves on a heaving sea. No less than that, and mebbe more.

" I was trying to decide where to put the pictures," she said. " Then we shall have everything settled before my husband gets home to-morrow."

We talked about the pictures — they were photographs of Venice and of Spain. Then we talked about the garden, and whether it was too late for her to plant much, and I promised her some aster plants. Then I saw a photograph of a young girl — it was her daughter, in Chicago University, who would be coming home to spend the Summer. Her son had been studying to be a surgeon, she said.

" My husband," she told me, " has some work to

do in the library in the City. We tried to live there — but we couldn't bear it."

"I'm glad you came here," I told her. "It's as nice a little place as any."

"I suppose so," she says only. "As nice as — any."

I don't think I stayed half an hour. But when I came out of there I walked away from Oldmoxon House not sensing much of anything except a kind of singing thanksgiving. I had never known anything of her people except the kind like our colored wash-woman. I knew about the negro colleges and all, but I guess I never thought about the folks that must be graduating from them. I'd always thought that there might be somebody like Mis' Fernandez, sometime, a long way off, when the Lord and us his helpers got around to it. And here already it was true of some of them. It was like seeing the future come true right in my face.

When I shut the gate of Oldmoxon House, I see Mis' Sykes peeking out her front door, and motioning to me. And at the sight of her, that I hadn't thought of since I went into that house, I had all I could do to keep from laughing and crying together, till the street rang with me. I crossed over and went in her gate; and her eye-brows were all cocked inquiring to take in the news.

"Go on," she says, "and tell me all there is to

tell. Is it all so — the name — and her husband — and all?"

"Yes," I says, "it's all so."

"I knew it when I see her come," says Mis' Sykes. "Her hat and her veil and her simple, good-cut black clothes — you can't fool me on a lady."

"No," I says. "You can't fool me, either."

"Well now," says Mis' Sykes, "there's nothing to hinder our banging right ahead with our plan for to-morrow night, is there?"

"Nothing whatever," I says, "to hinder me."

Mis' Sykes jerked herself around and looked at me irritable.

"Why don't you volunteer?" says she. "I hate to dig the news out of anybody with the can-opener."

I'd have given a good deal to feel that I didn't have to tell her, but just let her go ahead with the reception surprise. I knew, though, that I ought to tell her, not only because I knew her through and through, but because I couldn't count on the village. We're real democratic in the things we know about, but let a new situation stick up its head and we bound to the other side, automatic.

"Mis' Sykes," I says, "everything that we'd thought of our new neighbor is true. *Also,* she's going to be a new experience for us in a way we hadn't thought of. She's dark-skinned."

"A brunette," says Mis' Sykes. "I see that through her veil — what of it?"

"Nothing — nothing at all," says I. "You noticed then, that she's colored?"

I want to laugh yet, every time I think how Mis' Postmaster Sykes looked at me.

"*Colored!*" she says. "You mean — you can't mean —"

"No," I says, "nothing dangerous. It's going to give us a chance to see that what we've always said could be true sometime, away far off, is true of some of them now."

Mis' Sykes sprang up and began walking the floor.

"A family like that in Oldmoxon House — and my nearest neighbors," says she, wild. "It's outrageious — outrageious."

I don't use my words very good, but I know better than to say "outrageious." I don't know but it was her pronouncing it that way, in such a cause, that made me so mad.

"Mis' Sykes," I says, "Mis' Fernandez has got a better education than either you or I. She's a graduate of a Southern college, and her two children have been to colleges that you and I have never seen the inside of and never will. And her husband is a college professor, up here to study for a degree that I don't even know what the letters

stands for. In what," says I, "consists your and my superiority to that woman?"

"My gracious," says Mis' Sykes, "ain't you got no sense of fitness to you. Ain't she black?"

"Her skin ain't the same color as ours, you're saying," I says. "Don't it seem to you that that reason had ought to make a cat laugh?"

Mis' Sykes fair wheeled on me. "Calliope Marsh," says she, "the way you set your opinions against established notions is an insult to your kind."

"Established notions," I says over after her. "'Established notions.' That's just it. And who is it, of us two, that's being insulting to their kind now, Mis' Sykes?"

She was looking out the window, with her lips close-pressed and a thought between her narrowed eye-lids.

"I'll rejoin 'em — or whatever it is you call it," she says. "I'll rejoin 'em from living in that house next to me."

"Mis' Sykes!" says I. "But their piano and their book-cases and their name are just the same as yesterday. You know yourself how you said folks's furniture expressed them. And it does — so be they ain't using left-overs the way I am. I tell you, I've talked with her, and I know. Or rather I kept still while she told me things about Venice and Granada

where she'd been and I hadn't. You've got all you thought you had in that house, and education besides. Are you the Christian woman, Mis' Sykes, to turn your nose up at them?"

"Don't throw my faith in my face," says she, irritable.

"Well," I says, "I won't twit on facts. But anybody'd think the Golden Rule's fitted neat onto some folks to deal with, and is left flap at loose ends for them that don't match our skins. Is that sense, or ain't it?"

"It ain't the skin," she says. "Don't keep harping on that. It's them. They're different by nature."

Then she says the great, grand motto of the little thin slice of the human race that's been changed into superiority.

"You can't change human nature!" says she, ticking it out like a clock.

"Can't you?" says I. "*Can't* you? I'm interested. If that was true, you and I would be swinging by our tails, this minute, sociable, from your clothes-line."

By this time she didn't hear anything anybody said back — she'd got to that point in the argument.

"If," she says, positive, "if the Lord had intended dark-skinned folks to be different from what they are, he'd have seen to it by now."

I shifted with her obliging.

"Then," says I, "take the Fernandez family, in the Oldmoxon House. They're different. They're more different than you and I are. What you going to do about it?"

Mis' Sykes stamped her foot. "How do you know," she says, "that the Lord intended them to be educated? Tell me that!"

I sat looking down at her three-ply Ingrain carpet for a minute or two. Then I got up, and asked her for her chocolate frosting receipt.

"I'm going to use that on my cake for to-morrow night," I says. "And do you want me to help with the rest of the telephoning?"

"What do you mean?" she says, frigid. "You don't think for a minute I'm going on with that, I hope?"

"On with it?" I says. "Didn't you tell me you had the arrangements about all made?"

She sunk back, loose in her chair. "I shall be the Laughing Stock,— the Laughing Stock," she says, looking wild and glazed.

"Yes," says I, deliberate, determined and serene, "they'll say you were going to dance around and cater to this family because they've moved into the Oldmoxon House. They'll say you wanted to make sure, right away, to get in with them. They'll repeat what you've been saying about the elegant furniture, in good taste. And about the academic and

scholastic work being done. And about these folks being a distinct addition to Friendship Village society —"

"Don't, Calliope — oh, don't!" said Mis' Sykes, faint.

"Well, then," I says, getting up to leave, "go on ahead and act neighborly to them, the once, and decide later about keeping it up, as you would with anybody else."

It kind of swept over me — here we were, standing there, bickering and haggling, when out there on the planet that lay around Daphne Street were loose ends of creation to catch up and knit in.

"My gracious," I says, "I ain't saying they're all all right, am I? But I'm saying that as fast as those that try to grow, stick up their heads, it's the business of us that tootle for democracy, and for evolution, to help them on."

She looked at me, pitying.

"It's all so much bigger than that, Calliope," she says.

"True," says I, "for if some of them stick up their heads, it proves that more of them could — if we didn't stomp 'em down."

I got out in the air of the great, gold May day, that was like another way of life, leading up from our way. I took in a long breath of it — and that always helps me to see things big.

"One Spring," I says, "One world — one God

— one life — one future. Wouldn't you think we could match ourselves up?"

But when I got in my little house, I looked around on the homely inside of it — that always helps me to think how much better things can be, when we really know how. And I says:

"Oh, God, we here in America got up a terrible question for you to help us settle, didn't we? Well, *help* us! And help us to see, whatever's the way to settle anything, that giving the cold shoulder and the uplifted nose to any of the creatures you've made ain't the way to settle *nothing*. Amen."

Next morning I was standing in my door-way, breathing in the fresh, gold air, when in at the gate came that colored man of Mis' Fernandez's, and he had a big bouquet of roses. Not roses like we in the village often see. They were green-house bred.

"Mis' Fernandez's son done come home las' night and brung 'em," says the man.

"Her son," I says, "from college?"

"No'm," says the man. "F'om the war."

"From the what?" I says.

"F'om the war," he says over. "F'om U'pe."

He must have thought I was crazy. For a minute I stared at him, then I says "Glory be!" and I began to laugh. Then I told him to tell Mis' Fernandez that I'd be over in half an hour to thank her myself for the flowers, and in half an hour I

was going up to her front door. I had to make sure.

"Your son," I says, forgetting all about the roses, "he's in the American army?"

"He was," she said. "He fought in France for eighteen months. Now he has been discharged."

"Oh," I says to myself, "that arranges everything. It must."

"Perhaps you will let me tell you," she said. "He comes back to us wearing the cross of war."

"The cross of war!" I cried. "That they give when folks save folks in battle?" I said it just like saving folks is the principal business of it all.

"My son did save a wounded officer in No-man's land," she told me. "The officer — he was a white man."

"Oh," I says, and I couldn't say another word till I managed to ask her if her son had been in the draft.

"No," she said. "He volunteered April 7, 1917."

It wasn't until I got out in the street that I remembered I hadn't thanked her for the roses at all. But there wasn't time to think of that.

I headed straight for Mis' Silas Sykes. She looked awful bad, and I don't think probably she'd slept a wink all night. I ask' her casual how the reception was coming on, and she kind of began to cry.

"I don't know what you hector me for like this," she says. "Ain't it enough that I've got to call folks up to-day and tell them I've made a fool of myself?"

"Not yet," I says. "Not yet you ain't made one of yourself, Mis' Sykes. That's to come, if any. It is hard," I says, "to do the particular thing you'll have to do. There's them," I says crafty, "as'll gloat."

"I thought about them all night long," she says, her breath showing through her words.

"Then think no more, Mis' Sykes," I says, "because there's a reason over there in that house why we should go ahead with our plan — and it's a reason you can't get around."

She looked at me, like one looking with no hope. And then I told her.

I never saw a woman so checkered in her mind. Her head was all reversed, and where had been one notion, another bobbed up to take its place, and where the other one had been previous, a new one was dancing.

"But do they do that?" she ask'. "Do they give war-crosses to *negroes?*"

"Why not?" I says. "France don't care because the fore-fathers of these soldiers were made slaves by us. She don't lay it up against *them.* That don't touch their bravery. England never has minded dark skins — look at her East Indians and

Egyptians that they say are everywhere in London. Nobody cares but us. Of course France gives negroes crosses of war when they're brave — why shouldn't she?"

"My gracious," Mis' Sykes says, "but what'll folks say here if we do go ahead and recognize them?"

"Recognize *him!*" I cried. "Mis' Sykes — are you going to let him offer up his life, and go over to Europe and have his bravery recognized there, and then come back here and get the cold shoulder from you — are you? Then shame on us all!" I says.

Then Mis' Sykes said the things folks always say: "But if we recognize them, what about marriage?"

"See here," says I, "there's thousands and thousands of tuberculosis cases in this country to-day. And more hundreds of thousands with other diseases. Do we set the whole lot of them apart, and refuse to be decent to them, or do business with them, because they ought not to marry our girls and boys? Don't you see how that argument is just an excuse?"

"All the same," said Mis' Sykes, "it might happen."

"Then make a law against inter-marriage," I says. "That's easy. Nothing comes handier than making a new law. But don't snub the whole race

— especially those that have risked their lives for you, Mis' Sykes!"

She stared at me, her face looking all triangular.

"It's for you to show them what to do," I pressed her. "They'll do what you do."

Mis' Sykes kind of stopped winking and breathing.

"I could make them do it, I bet you," she says, proud.

"Of course you could," I egged her on. "You could just take for granted everybody meant to be decent, and carry it off, matter-of-fact."

She stood up and walked around the room, her curl-papers setting strange on her proud ways.

"Don't figger on it, Mis' Sykes," I says. "Just think how much easier it is to be leading folks into something they ain't used to than to have them all laughing at you behind your back for getting come up with."

It wasn't the highest motive — but then, I only used it for a finishing touch. And for a tassel I says, moving off rapid:

"Now I'm going home to stir up my cake for the party."

She didn't say anything, and I went off up the street.

I remember it was one of the times when it came to me, strong, that there's something big and near working away through us, to get us to grow in spite of us. In spite of us.

And when I had my chocolate cake baked, I lay

down on the lounge in my dining-room, and planned out how nice it was going to be, that night. . . .

There was a little shower, and then the sun came back again; so by the time we all began to move toward Mis' Sykes's, between seven and eight, everything was fresh and earth-smelling and wet-sweet green. And there was a lovely, flowing light, like in a dream.

Whenever I have a hard thing to do, be it housecleaning or be it quenching down my pride, I always think of the way I see Mis' Sykes do hers. Dressed in her best gray poplin with a white lace yoke, and hair crimped front *and* back, Mis' Sykes received us all, reserved and formal — not with her real society pucker, but with her most leader-like look.

Everybody was there — nobody was lacking. There must have been above fifty. I couldn't talk for trying to reckon how each of them would act, as soon as they knew.

" Blistering Benson," says Timothy Toplady, that his wife had got him into his frock-tail coat that he keeps to be pall-bearer in, "— kind of nice to welcome in another first family, ain't it? "

Mis' Sykes heard him. " Timothy Toplady, you ain't enough democracy to shake a stick at," she says, regal; and left him squenched, but with his lips moving.

" I'm just crazy to get upstairs in the Oldmoxon

House," says Mis' Hubbelthwait. "How do you s'pose they've got it furnished?"

"They're thinking more about the furniture of their heads than of their upstairs chambers," snaps back Mis' Sykes. And I see anew that whatever Mis' Sykes goes into, she goes into up to her eyes, thorough and firm.

"Calliope," she says, "you might run over now and see how they're situated. And be there with them when we come."

I knew that Mis' Sykes couldn't quite bear to make her speech with me looking at her, so I waited out in the entry and heard her do it — I couldn't help that. And honest, I think my respect for her rose while she done so, almost as much as if she'd meant what she said. Mis' Sykes is awful convincing. She can make you wish you'd worn gloves or went without, according to the way she's done herself; and so it was that night, in the cause she'd taken up with, unbeknownst.

She rapped on the table with the blue-glass paper weight.

"Friends," she says, distinct and serene, and everybody's buzzing simmered down. "Before we go over, I must tell you a little about our new — neighbors. The name as you know is Fernandez — Burton Fernandez. The father is a college professor, now in the City doing academic and scholastic work to a degree, as they say. The daughter is in one of

our great universities. The mother, a graduate of a Southern college, has traveled extensive in Venice and — and otherwise. I can't believe —" here her voice wobbled just for an instant, " I can't believe that there is one here who will not understand the significance of our party when I add that the family happens to be colored. I am sure that you will agree with me — with *me* — that these elegant educations merit our approbation."

She made a little pause to let it sink in. Then she topped it off. She told them about the returned soldier and the cross of war.

" If there is anybody," said she — and I knew how she was glancing round among them; " if there is anybody who can't appreciate *that,* we'll gladly excuse them from the room."

Yes, she done it magnificent. Mis' Sykes carried the day, high-handed. I couldn't but remember, as I slipped out, how in Winter she wears ear-muffs till we've all come to consider going without them is affected.

I ran across the street, still in that golden, pouring light. In the Oldmoxon House was a surprise. Sitting with Mrs. Fernandez before the little light May fire, was her husband, and a slim, tall girl in a smoky brown dress, that was their daughter, home from her school to see her brother. Then the soldier boy came in. Even yet I can't talk much about him: A slight, silent youth, that had left his senior

year at college to volunteer in the army, and had come home now to take up his life as best he could; and on the breast of his uniform shone the little cross, won by saving his white captain, under fire.

I sat with them before their hearth, but I didn't half hear what they said. I was looking at the room, and at the four quiet folks that had done so much for themselves — more than any of us in the village, in proportion — and done it on paths none of us had ever had to walk. And the things I was thinking made such a noise I couldn't pay attention to just the talk. Over and over it kept going through my head: In fifty years. *In fifty years!*

At last came the stir and shuffle I'd been waiting for and the door-bell rang.

" Don't go," they said, when I sprang up; and they followed me into the hall. So there we were when the door opened, and everybody came crowding in.

Mis' Sykes was ahead, and it came to me, when I saw how deathly pale she was, that a prejudice is a living thing, after all — not a dead thing; and that to them that are in its grasp, your heart has got to go out just as much as to them that suffer from it.

I waved my hand to them all, promiscuous, crowding in with their baskets.

" Neighbors," I says, " here's our new neighbors. Name yourselves gradual."

They set their baskets in the hall, and came into

the big room where the fire was. And I was kind of nervous, because our men are no good on earth at breaking the ice, except with a pick; and our women, when they get in a strange room, are awful apt to be so taken up looking round them that they forget to work up anything to say.

But I needn't have worried. No sooner had we sat down than somebody spoke out, deep and full. Standing in the midst of us was Burton Fernandez, and it was him. And his voice went as a voice goes when it's got more to carry than just words, or just thoughts.

" My friends," he said, " I cannot bear to have you put yourselves in a false position. When you came, perhaps you didn't know. I mean — did you think, perhaps, that we were of your race? "

It was Mis' Sykes who answered him, grand and positive, and as if she was already thinking up her answer when she was born.

" Certainly not," she says. " We were informed — all of us." Then I saw her get herself together for something tremenjus, that should leave no doubt in anybody's mind. " What of that? " says she.

He stood still for a minute. He had deep-set eyes and a tired face that didn't do anything to itself when he talked. But his voice — that did. And when he began to speak again, it seemed to me that the voice of his whole race was coming through him.

" My friends," he said, " how can we talk of other

things when our minds are filled with just what this means to us?"

We all kept still. None of us would have known how to say it, even if we had known what to say.

He said: "I'm not speaking of the difficulties — they don't so much matter. Nothing matters — except that even when we have made the struggle, then we're despised no less. We don't often talk to you about it — it's the surprise of this — you must forgive me. But I want you to know that from the time I began my school life, there have been many who despised, and a few who helped, but never until to-night have there been any of your people with the look and word of neighbor — never once in our lives until to-night."

In the silence that fell when he'd finished, I sat there knowing that even now it wasn't like he thought it was — and I wished that it had been so.

He put his hand on his boy's shoulder.

"It's for his sake," he said, "that I thank you most."

Mis' Sykes was equal to that, too.

"In the name of our whole town," she says to that young soldier, "we thank *you* for what you've done."

He just nodded a little, and nobody said anything more. And it came to me that most everything is more so than we most always suppose it to be.

When Mis' Toplady don't know quite what to do with a minute, she always brings her hands together in a sort of spontaneous-sounding clap, and kind of bustles her shoulders. She done that now.

"I motion I'll take charge of the refreshments," she says. "Who'll volunteer? I'm crazy to see what-all we've brought."

Everybody laughed, and rustled, easy. And I slipped over to the daughter, standing by herself by the fire-place.

"You take, don't you?" I ask' her.

"'Take?'" she says, puzzled.

"Music, I mean," I told her. (We always mean music when we say "take" in Friendship Village.)

"No," she says, "but my brother plays, sometimes."

The soldier sat down to the piano, when I asked him, and he played, soft and strong, and something beautiful. His cross shone on his breast when he moved. And me, I stood by the piano, and I heard the soul of the music come gentling through his soul, just like it didn't make any difference to the music, one way or the other. . . .

Music. Music that spoke. Music that sounded like laughing voices. . . . No, for it was laughing voices. . . .

I opened my eyes, and there in my dining-room, by the lounge, stood Mis' Toplady and Mis' Hol-

comb, laughing at me for being asleep. Then they sat down by me, and they didn't laugh any more.

"Calliope," Mis' Toplady says, "Mis' Sykes has been round to everybody, and told them about the Oldmoxon House folks."

"And she took a vote on what to do to-night," says Mame Holcomb.

"Giving a little advice of her own, by the wayside," Mis' Toplady adds.

I sat up and looked at them. With the soldier's music still in my ears, I couldn't take it in.

"You don't mean —" I tried to ask them.

"That's it," says Mis' Toplady. "Everybody voted to have a public meeting to honor the soldiers — the colored soldier with the rest. But that's as far as it will go."

"But he don't want to be honored!" I cried. "He wants to be neighbored — the way anybody does when they're worth it."

"Mis' Sykes says," says Mis' Toplady, "that we mustn't forget what is fitting and what isn't."

And Mis' Holcomb added: "She carried it off grand. Everybody thinks just the way she does."

My reception-surprise cake stood ready on the table. After a while, we three sat down around it, and cut it for ourselves. But all the while we ate, that soldier's music was still playing for me; and what hadn't happened was more real for me than the things that were true.

THE BROTHER-MAN [1]

When the New Race comes — those whom Hudson calls "that blameless, spiritualized race that is to follow" — surely they will look back with some sense of actual romance upon the faint tapers which we now light, both individual and social tapers. They will make their allowance for us, as do we for the ambiguous knights of chivalry. And while the New Race will shudder at us — at our disorganization with its war, its poverty and its other crime — yet I think that they will love us a little for our ineffectual ministries, as already we love them for exceeding our utmost dream.

Don't you love a love-story; starting right before your eyes as casual as if it was preserves getting cooked or parsley coming up? It doesn't often happen to me to see one start, but once it did. It didn't start like anything at all that was going to be anything, but just still and quiet, same as the stars come out. I guess that's the way most great things move, isn't it? Still and quiet, like stars coming out. Or similar to stars.

It was the time of the Proudfits' big what-they-

1 Copyright, 1913, *The Delineator.*

called week-end parties, and it was the Saturday of the biggest of them, when a dozen city people came down to Friendship Village for the lark. And with them was to come a Piano Lady and a Violin Man — and a man I'd known about in the magazines, a Novel-and-Poem Man that writes the kind of things that gets through all the walls between you and the world, so's you can talk to everything there is. I was crazy to see the Novel-and-Poem Man — from behind somewheres, though, so's he wouldn't see me and look down on me. And when Miss Clementina Proudfit asked me to bring her out some things from the city Saturday night, chocolate peppermints and red candles and like that, and said she'd send the automobile to the train for me to fetch up the things and see the decorations, I was real pleased. But I was the most excited about maybe seeing the Poem-and-Novel Man.

"What's he like, Miss Clementina?" I ask' her. "When I hear his name I feel like when I hear the President's. Or even more that way."

"I've never met him," she says. "Mother knows him — he's her lion, not mine."

"He writes lovely things," I says, "things that makes you feel like everybody's way of doing is only lukewarm, and like you could just bring yourself to a boil to do good and straighten things out in the world, no matter what the lukewarm-way folks thought."

Miss Clementina looked over to me with a wonderful way she had — beautiful face and beautiful eyes softening to Summer.

"I know — know," she says; "I dread meeting him, for fear he doesn't mean it."

I knew what she meant. You can mean a thing you write in a book, or that you say in talk, or for other folks to do. But meaning it for *living* it — that's different.

I came out from the city that night on the accommodation, tired to death and loaded down with bundles for everybody in Friendship Village. Folks used to send into town by me for everything *but* stoves and wagons, though I wouldn't buy anything there except what you can't buy in the village: lamb's-wool for comforters, and cut-glass and baby-pushers, and shrimps — that Silas won't keep in the post-office store, because they don't agree with his stomach. Well, I was all packages that night, and it was through dropping one in the seat in front of me that I first saw the little boy.

He was laying down, getting to sleep if he could and pulling his eyes open occasional to see what was going on around him. His mother had had the seat turned, and she sat there beyond him, facing me, and I noticed her — flat red cheeks, an ostrich feather broke in the middle, blue and red stone rings on three fingers, and giving a good deal of attention to studying the folks around her. She was the

kind of woman you see and don't look back to, 'count of other things interesting you more.

But the little boy, he was different. He wasn't more than a year old, and he didn't look that — and his cheeks were flushed and his eyelashes and mouth made you think "My!" I remember feeling I didn't see how the woman could keep from waking him up, just to prove he was hers and she could if she wanted to.

Instead of that, all she did was continually to get up and go out of the car. Every station we stopped at — and the accommodation acts like it was made for the stations and not the stations for it — she was up and out, as if the town was something swimming up to the car-door to speak to her. She'd leave the baby asleep in the seat, and I wondered what would happen if he woke up while she was gone, and started to roll. She stayed every time up till after the train started — I didn't wonder it made her cold, and that after a bit she put on her coat before she went. And once or twice she carried out her valise with her, as if she might have expected somebody to be there to get it. "Mebbe she's got somebody's laundry," thinks I, "and mebbe a stranger has asked her to bring it out on the train and she can't remember what station it's to be put off at." They send things to stations along the way a lot on the accommodation — everybody being neighbors, so.

Well, when we got to the Junction, out she went again, cloak and valise and all. But I didn't think much about her then, because at the Junction it's always all excitement, being that's where they switch the parlor car off the train, and whoever is in it for Friendship Village has to come back in the day coach for the rest of the way, and be just folks. And among those that came back that night was the Brother-man.

I dunno if you'll know what I mean by that name for him. Some men are just men, like they thought God made them just for the pleasure of making them. And some men are flying around like they wanted to prove that the Almighty didn't make a mistake when He created them. But there are some men that just live like God hadn't made them so much as that they're a piece of Him, and they haven't forgotten it and they feel kindly toward all the other pieces. Well, this man was one of the Brother-men. I knew it the minute I saw him.

By the time he came in the car, moving leisurely and like getting a seat wasn't so interesting as most other things, there wasn't a seat left, excepting only the turned one in front of the little chap asleep. The man looked around idle for a minute and see that they wasn't cloak or valise keeping that seat, and he sat down and opened the book he'd had his finger in the place all the time, and allowed to read.

There's consid'rable switching to do at the Junc-

tion, time we get started; and the jolts and bounces did just exactly what I thought they would do — woke the little chap up. From before the train started he begun stirring and whimpering — that way a baby does when it wants nothing in the world but a hand to be laid on it. Isn't it as if its mother's hand was a kind of healing that big folks forget about needing? By the time the train was out on the road in earnest, the little chap, he was in earnest, too. And he just what-you-might-say yelled. But no mother came. They wasn't a mother's hand with big red and blue rings on three fingers to lay on the little boy's back. And there wasn't a mother of him anywhere's in sight.

In a minute or two the Brother-man looked up. He hadn't seemed to see the baby before or to sense that he *was* a baby. And he looked at him crying and he laid his book down and he looked all around him, perplexish, and then he looked over to me that was looking at him perplexish, too. And being he was a man and I wasn't, I got right up and went round there and picked the little chap up in my arms and sat down with him.

"His ma went out of the car somewheres," I explained it.

He had lifted his hat and jumped up, polite as if he was the one I'd picked up. And he stood looking down at me.

"I wonder if I couldn't fetch her," he says —

and his voice was one of the voices that most says an idea all alone. I mean you'd most have known what he meant if he'd just spoke along without using any words — oh, well, I dunno if that sounds like anything, but I guess you know the kind I mean. The Novel-and-Poem Man's stories are the same kind, being they say so much that never does get set up in type.

The baby didn't stop crying at all — seems as though your hands don't have the right healing unless — unless — well, it didn't stop nor even halt. And so I says, hesitating, I says: "You wouldn't know her," I says. "I been watching her. I could find her better — if so be you wouldn't mind taking the baby."

The Brother-man put out his arms. I remember I looked up in his face then, and he was smiling — and his smile talked the same as his voice. And his face was all full of what he meant. He had one of those Summer faces like Miss Clementina's — just a general liking of the minute and a special liking for all the world. And what he said made me think of Summer, too:

"*Mind?*" says he. "Why it's like putting your cap over a butterfly."

He took the little fellow in his arms, and it was then that I first sensed how beautiful the Brother-man was — strong and fine and quiet, like he done whatever he done, and said whatever he said, *all*

over him, soul and all, and didn't just speak with his muscles, same as some. And the baby, he was beautiful, too, big and fine and healthy and a boy, only not still a minute nor didn't know what quiet meant. But he stopped crying the instant the man took him, and they both looked at each other like — oh, like they were more alike than the years between them wanted to let them think. Isn't it pitiful and isn't it wonderful — when two folks meet? Big or little, nice or horrid, pleasant or cross, famous or ragged or talking or scairt — it don't make any differ'nce. They're just brother-pieces, broke off the same way. That was how the Brother-man looked down at the little chap, and I dunno but that was how the little chap looked up at him. Because the little thing threw out his arms toward him, and we both see the letter under his blanket pinned to his chest.

All of a sudden, I understood what had happened — almost without the use of my brain, as you do sometimes.

"Sit down a minute," I said to the Brother-man. "I guess mebbe this letter tells where she is."

And so it did. It was written in pencil, spelled irregular and addressed uphill, and the direction told the story even before the letter did. "To Anybody," the direction was. And the inside of the letter said:

"Take care of my Baby. I ain't fit and never was and now don't think to be anywheres long. Don't look for me.

The baby would be best off with anybody but me, and don't think to be anywheres long and so would be orphant quite soon sure. He ain't no name so best not put mine except.

MOTHER.

P. S. If he puts out his hand he means you should kiss his hand then he won't cry. Don't forget, then he won't cry.

P. S. When he can't get to sleep he can get to sleep if you rub the back of his neck.

I remember how the Brother-man looked at me when we'd got it spelled out.

"Oh," he said — and then he said a name that sounded like somebody calling to its Father from inside the dark.

I hate to think of what I said. I said it kind of mechanical and wooden, the way we get to be from shifting the burdens off our own backs where they belong, onto somebody else's back — and doing it second-nature, and as if we were constructed slanting so that burdens could slip off. What I said was:

"I suppose we'd better tell the conductor."

"Tell the conductor!" said he, wondering. "What on earth for?"

"I dunno," says I, some taken back. I suppose I'd had some far notion of telling him because he wore a uniform.

"What do we want to tell him for?" this Brother-man repeated. "*We* know."

Oh, but that's come back to me, time and time

again, when I've thought I needed help in taking care of somebody, or settling something, or doing the best way for folks. "What do we want to tell the conductor or anybody else for? *We* know." And ten to one we are the one who can do the thing ourselves.

"But what are we going to do?" I said. I think that his eyes were the kind of eyes that just make you say "What are *we* going to do?" and not "What are *you* going to do?" or "What are *they* going to do?"— same as most folks start to say, same as I had started.

For the first time the Brother-man looked helpless — but he spoke real firm.

"Keep him," he says, simple.

"Keep him!" I said over — since I had lived quite a while in a world where those words are not common.

He looked down thoughtful at the little chap who was lying there, contented, going here and there with his fists, and looking up at the lights as if he was reflecting over the matter some himself.

"The conductor," said the Brother-man, "would telegraph, and most likely find the mother. If he was efficient enough, he might even get her arrested. And what earthly good would that do to the child? Our concern is with this little old man here, with his life hanging on his shoulders waiting to be lived. Isn't it?" he asked, simple. And in a minute, he

added: "I always hoped that this would never happen to me — because when it does happen, there's only one thing to do: Keep them." And he added in another minute: "I don't know — I ought to look at it that I've been saved the trouble of going out and finding a way to help —" only you understand, his words came all glossy and real different from mine.

I tell you, anybody like that makes all the soul in you get up and recognize itself as *being* you; and your body and what it wants and what it is afraid of is no more able to run you then than a pinch of dirt would be, sprinkled on your wings. Before I knew it, my body was keeping quiet, like a child that's been brought up well. And my soul was saying whatever it pleased.

"I'm a woman," I said, "and alone in the world. I'm the one to take him."

"I'm alone in the world too," he said, "and I'm a man. So I'm just as able to care for him as you are. I'll keep him."

Then he looked down the car, kind of startled, and began smiling, slow and nice.

"On my word," he said, "I'd forgotten that besides being a man I'm about to be a guest. And this little old chap wasn't included in the invitation."

I looked out the window to see where we were getting, and there we were drawing over the Flats outside Friendship Village, and the brakeman came

to the door and shouted the name. When I hear the name that way, and when I see the Fair ground and the Catholic church steeple and the canal bridge and the old fort and the gas house, it's always as sweet as something new, and as something old, and it's something sweeter than either. It makes me feel happy and good and like two folks instead of one.

"Look here," I said, brisk, "this is where I get off. This is home. And I'm going to take this baby with me. You go on to your visiting place — so be you'll help me off," I says, "with my baby and my bundles that's for half of Friendship Village."

"Friendship Village!" he said over, as if he hadn't heard the man call. "Is this Friendship Village? Why, then this," he said, "is where I'm going too. This is where the Proudfits live, isn't it?" he said — and he said some more, meditative, about towns acting so important over having one name and not another, when nobody can remember either name. But I hardly heard him. He was going to the Proudfits'. And without knowing how I knew it, I knew all over me, all of a sudden, who he was: That he was the Novel-and-Poem man himself.

"You *can't* be him!" I said aloud. I don't know what I was looking for — a man with wings or what. But it wasn't for somebody like this — all simple and still and every day — like stars coming

out. "You can't be him," says I, mentioning his name. "He was to get here this afternoon on the Through."

"That alone would prove I'm I," he said, merry. "I always miss the Throughs."

Think of that. . . . There I'd been riding all that way beside him, talking to him as familiar as if he had been just folks.

It seems a dream when I think of it now. The Proudfits' automobile was there for him too — because he had telegraphed that he would take the next train — as well as for me and the chocolate peppermints and the red candles. And so, before I could think about me being me sure enough, there I was in the Proudfits' car, glassed in and lit up, and a stranger-baby in my arms; and beside me the Novel-and-Poem man that was the Brother-man too. — the man that had made me talk through walls with everything there is. Oh, and how I wanted to tell him! And when I tried to tell him what he had meant to me, how do you guess it came out of my brain?

"I've read your book," says I, like a goose.

But he seemed real sort of pleased. "I've been honored," he said, gentle.

I looked up at him; and I knew how he knew already that I didn't know all the hard parts in the book, and all the big words, and some of the little nice things he had tried to work out to suit him.

And it seemed as if any praise of mine would only make him hurt with not being appreciated. Still, I wanted my best to say something out of the gratitude in me.

"It — helped," I said; and couldn't say more to save me.

But he turned and looked down at me almost as he had looked at the little chap.

"That is the only compliment I ever try to get," he said to me, as grave as grave.

And at that I saw plain what it was that had made him seem so much like a friend, and what had made me think to call him the Brother-man. Why, he was folks, like me. He wasn't only somebody big and distinguished and name-in-the-paper. He was like those that you meet all the time, going round the streets, talking to you casual, coming out of their houses quiet as stars coming out. He was folks and a brother to folks; and he knew it, and he seemed to want to keep letting folks know that he knew it. He wasn't the kind that goes around thinking "Me, me, me," nor even "You and me." It was *"You and me and all of us"* with the Brother-man.

"Isn't it strange," he says once, while we rode along, "that what all these streets and lights and houses are for, and what the whole world is for is helped along by taking just one little chap and bringing him up — bringing him up?" And he looked down at the baby, that was drowsing off in my arms,

as if little chaps in general were to him windows into somewhere else.

The Proudfit house was lamps from top to bottom, but I could see from the glass vestibule that the big rooms were all empty, and I thought mebbe they hadn't had dinner yet, being they have it all unholy hours when most folks's is digested and ready to let them sleep. But when we stepped in the hall I heard a little tip-tap of strings from up above, and it was from the music-room that opens off the first stair-landing, and dinner was over and they were all up there; and the Piano Lady and the Violin Man were gettin' ready to play. Madame Proudfit had heard the car, and came down the stairs, saying a little pleased word when she saw the Brother-man. She looked lovely in black lace, and jewels I didn't know the name of, and she was gracious and glad and made him one of the welcomes that stay alive afterwards and are almost *people* to you to think about. The Brother-man kissed her hand, and he says to her, some rueful and some wanting to laugh:

"I'm most awfully sorry about the train, Madame Proudfit. But — I've brought two of us to make up for being so late. Will — will that not do?" he says.

Madame Proudfit looked over at me with a smile that was like people too — only her smile was like

nice company and his was like dear friends; and then she saw the baby.

" Calliope! " she said, " what on earth have you been doing now? "

" She hasn't done it. I did it," says the Brother-man. " Look at him! You rub the back of his neck when he won't sleep."

Madame Proudfit looked from him to me.

" How utterly, extravagantly like both of you! " Madame Proudfit said. " Come in the library and tell me about it."

We went in the big, brown library, where nothing looked as if it would understand about this, except, mebbe, some of the books — and not all of them — and the fire, that was living on the hearth, understanding all about everything. I sat by the fire and pulled back the little chap's blanket and undid his coat and took his bonnet off; his hair was all mussed up at the back and the cheek he'd slept on was warm-red. Madame Proudfit and the Brother-man stood on the hearth-rug, looking down. Only she was looking from one star to another, and the Brother-man and I, we were on the same star, looking round.

We told her what had happened, some of his telling and some of mine. It came over me, while we were doing it, that what had sounded so sensible and sure in the train and in the automobile and in our two hearts sounded different here in the Proud-

fits' big, brown library, with Madame Proudfit in black lace and jewels I didn't know the name of, listening. But then I looked up in the Brotherman's face and I got *right back,* like he was a kind of perpetual telegraph, the feeling of its being sensible and the *only* sensible thing to do. Sensible in the sense of your soul being sensible, and not just your being sensible like your neighbors.

"But, my dear, dear children," Madame Proudfit says, and stopped. "My *dear* children," she says on, "what, exactly, are you going to do with him?"

"Keep him!" says the Brother-man prompt, and beamed on her as if he had said the one possible answer.

"But — keep him!" says Madame Proudfit. "How 'keep him'? Be practical. What are you going to do?"

It makes you feel real helpless when folks in black lace tell you to be practical, as if that came before everything else — especially when their "practical" and your "practical" might as well be in two different languages. And yet Madame Proudfit is kind and good too, and she understands that you've got to help or you might as well not be alive; and she gives and gives and gives. But *this* — well, she saw the need and all that, but her way that night would have been to give money and send the little chap away. You know how some are. They can under-

stand everything good and kind — up to a certain point. And that point is, *keep him.* They can't seem to get past that.

"*Keep him!*" she says. "Make your bachelor apartment into a nursery? Or you, Calliope, leave him to mind the house while you are canvassing? Be practical. What, *exactly,* are you going to do?"

Then the Brother-man frowned a little — I hadn't known he could, but I was glad he knew how.

"Really," he said, "I haven't decided yet on the cut of his knickerbockers, or on what college he shall attend, or whether he shall spend his vacations at home or abroad. The details will get themselves done. I only know I mean to *keep him.*"

She shook her head as if she was talking to a foreign language; then we heard somebody coming — a little rustle and swish and afterwards a voice. These three things by themselves would have made somebody more attractive than some women know how to be. I'll never forget how she seemed when she came to the door — Miss Clementina, waiting to speak with her mother and not knowing anybody else was with her.

Honest, I couldn't tell what her dress was — and me a woman that has turned her hand to dressmaking. It was all thin, like light, and it had all little ways of hanging that made you know you never could make one like it, so's you might as well enjoy

yourself looking and not fuss with trying to remember how it was put together. But her dress wasn't so much like light as her face. Miss Clementina's face — oh, it was like the face of a beautiful woman that somebody tells you about, and that you never do get to see, and if you did, like enough she might not be so beautiful after all — but you always think of her as being the way you mean when you say "beautiful." Miss Clementina looked like that. And when I saw her that night I could hardly wait to have her face and eyes soften all to Summer, that wonderful way she had.

"Oh, Miss Clementina," I says, "I've got a baby. At least, he's only half mine. I mean —"

Then, while she was coming toward us along the lamp-light, as if it was made to bring her, the little chap began waking up. He stirred, and budded up his lips, and said little baby-things in his throat, and begun to cry, soft and lonesome, as if he didn't understand. Oh, isn't it true? A baby's waking-up minute, when it cries a little and don't know where it is, ain't that like us, sometimes crying out sort of blind to be took care of? And when the little thing opened his eyes, first thing he saw was Miss Clementina, standing beside him. And what did that little chap do instead of stopping crying but just hold out one hand toward her, and kind of bend across, same as if he meant something.

With that the Brother-man, that Madame Proud-

fit hadn't had a chance yet to present to Miss Clementina, he says to her all excited:

"He wants you to kiss his hand! Kiss his hand and he'll stop crying!"

Miss Clementina looked up at him like a little question, then she stooped and kissed the baby's hand, and we three watched him perfectly breathless to see what he would do. And he done exactly what that up-hill note had said he would — he stopped crying, and he done more than it said he would — he smiled sweet and bright, and as if he knew something else about it. And we three looked at each other and at him, and we smiled, too. And it made a nice minute.

"Clementina," said Madame Proudfit, like another minute that wasn't so very well acquainted with the one that was being, and then she presented the Brother-man. But instead of a regular society, say-what-you-ought-to-say answer to her greeting, the Brother-man says to her:

"Miss Proudfit, you shall arbitrate! Somebody left him to this lady and me — or to anybody like, or unlike us — on the train. Shall we find his own mother that has run away from him? Or shall we send him to an institution? Or shall we keep him? Which way," he says, smiling, "is the way that *is* the way?"

She looked up at him as if she knew, clear inside his words, what he was talking about.

"Are you," she ask' him, half merry, but all in earnest too, "are you going to decide with your heart or your head?"

"Why, with my soul, I hope," says the Brotherman, simple.

Miss Clementina nodded a little, and I saw her face all Summer-soft as she answered him.

"Then," she said, "almost nobody will tell you so, but — there's only one way."

"I know it," says he, gentle.

"I know it," says I, solemn.

We three stood looking at each other from close on the same star, knowing all over us that if you decide a thing with your head you'll probably shift a burden off; if you decide with your heart you'll probably give, give, give, like Madame Proudfit does, to pay somebody else liberal to take the burden; but if you decide it with your soul, you give your own self to whatever is going on. And you know that's the way that *is* the way.

All of a sudden, as if words that were not being said had got loose and were saying themselves anyway, the music — that had been tip-tapping along all the while since we came — started in, sudden and beautiful, with the Piano Lady and the Violin Man playing up there in the landing room. I don't know whether it was a lullaby — though I shouldn't be surprised if it was, because I think sometimes in this world things happen just like they were being

stage-managed by somebody that knows. But anyway — oh, it had a lullaby sound, a kind-of rocking, tender, just-you-and-me meaning; that ain't so very far from the you-and-me-and-all-of-us meaning when they're both said right and deep down.

I looked up at Miss Clementina and the Brother-man — as you do look up when some nice little thing has happened that you think whoever you're with will understand. But they didn't look back at me. They looked over to each other. They looked over to each other, swift at the first, but lasting long, and with the faces of both of them softening to Summer. And the music went heavenly-ing on, into the room, and into living, and into everything, and it was as if the whole minute was turned into its own spirit and then was said out in a sound.

Miss Clementina and the Brother-man looked away and down at the little chap that Miss Clementina was holding his hand. It was as if there was a pulse in the room — the Great Pulse that we all beat to, and that now and then we hear. But those two didn't see me at all; and all of a sudden I understood, how there was still another star that I didn't know anything about, and that they two were standing there together, they two and the little chap — but not me. Oh, it was wonderful — starting the way great things start, still and quiet like stars coming out. So still that they didn't either of them know it. And I felt as if everything was

some better and some holier than I had ever known.

Then Madame Proudfit, she leans out from her star, gracious and benign, and certain sure that her star was the only one that had eternal truth inside it; and she spoke with a manner of waving her hand good natured to all the other little stars, including ours:

"You mad, mad, children!" she said. "You *are* mad. But you are very picturesque in your decisions, there's no denying that. He would probably be better cared for, more scientifically fed, and all that, in a good, hired, private family. But that's as you see it. Be mad, if you like — I'm here to watch over you!"

She had quite a nice tidy high point of view about it — but oh, it wasn't ours. It wasn't ours. We three — the Brother-man and Miss Clementina and me — we sort of hugged our own way. And the little chap he kept smiling, like he sort of hugged it too.

So that was the way it was. Miss Clementina and the Brother-man — that she'd been afraid to meet, 'count of thinking mebbe he didn't mean his writings for living — were in love from before they knew it. And I think it was part because they both meant life strong enough for living and not just for thinking, like the lukewarm folks do.

I kept the little chap with me the three months

or so that went by before the wedding — and I could hardly bear to let him go then.

" Why don't you keep him for them the first year or so? " Friendship Village ask' me. But there's some things even your own town doesn't always understand. " It's so unromantic for them to take him now," some of them even said.

But I says to them what I say now: " There's things that's bigger than romantic and there's things that's bigger than practical, so be some of both is mixed in right proportion. And the biggest thing I know in this world is when folks say over, ' You and me and all of us,' like voices, speaking to everybody's Father from inside the dark."

THE CABLE [1]

I SAYS to myself: "What shall I do? What shall I do?"

I crushed the magazine down on my knee, and sat there rocking with it between my hands.

It was just a story about a little fellow with a brick. They met him, a little boy six years old, somewhere in Europe, going along up toward one of the milk stations, at sunrise. They wondered why he carried a brick, and they asked him: "Why do you have the brick?" "You see," he says, "it's so wet. I can get up on this." And he stood on his brick in the mud before the milk station for five hours, waiting for his supplies that was a pint of milk to take home to his mother.

Mebbe it was queer that this struck me all of a heap, when the big war I'd got used to. But you can't get used to the things that hurt a child.

And then I kept thinking about Bennie. Supposing it had been Bennie, with the brick? Bennie was the little boy that his young father had gone back to the old country, and Bennie hadn't any mother. So I had him.

Because I had to do something, I went out on the

1 Copyright, 1916, *Collier's Weekly*, as "Over There."

porch and called him. He came running from his swing — his coat was too big for him and his ears stuck out, but he was an awful sweet little boy. The kind you want to have around.

"Bennie," I says, "I know little boys hate it. But *could* you leave me hug you?"

He kind of saw I was feeling bad — like a child can — and he came right up to me and he says:

"I got one hug left. *Here* it is!"

And he hugged me grand.

Then he ran back down the path, throwing his legs out sideways, kind of like a little calf, the way he does. And I set down on the side stoop, and I cried.

"Oh, blessed God," I says, "supposing Bennie was running round Europe with a brick, waiting five hours in the mud for milk for his ma, that he ain't got none?"

When I feel like that, I can't sit still. I have to walk. So I opened the side gate and left Bennie run through into Mis' Holcomb's yard, that was ironing on her back porch, and I says to her to please keep an eye on him. And then I headed down the street, towards nothing; and my heart just filled out ready to blow up.

As I went, I heard a bell strike. It was a strange bell, and I wondered. Then I remembered.

"The new Town Hall's new bell," I thought. "It's come and it's up. They're trying it."

And it seemed like the voice of the town, saying something.

In the door of the newspaper office sat the editor, Luke Norris, his red face and black hair buried behind a tore newspaper.

"Hello, Luke," I says, sheer out of wanting human looks and words from somebody.

He laid down his newspaper, and he took his breath quick and he says: "I wish't Europe wasn't so far off. I'd like to go over there — with a basket."

I overtook little Nuzie Cook, going along home, — little thin thing she was, with such high eye-brows that her face looked like its windows were up.

"Nuzie," I says, "how's your ma?" And that was a brighter subject, because Mis' Cook has only got the rheumatism and the shingles.

"Ma's in bed," says Nuzie. "She's worried about her folks in the old country — she ain't heard and she can't sleep."

I went to a house where I knew there was a baby, and I played with that. Then I went to call on Mis' Perkins, that ain't got sense enough to talk about anything that is anything, so she kind of rested me. But into Mis' Hunter's was a little young rabbit, that her husband had plowed into its ma's nest, and he'd brought it in with its leg cut by the plow, and they was trying to decide what best to do. And I begun hurting inside again, and thinking:

"Nothing but a rabbit — a baby rabbit — and over there. . . ."

I didn't say anything. Pretty soon I turned back home. And then I ran into the McVicars — three of them.

The McVicars — three of them — had Spring hats trimmed with cherries and I guess raisins and other edibles; the McVicars — mother and two offspring, sprung quite a while back — are new-come to the village, and stylish. They hadn't been in town in two months when they'd been invited twice to drive to the cemetery in the closed carriages, though they hadn't known either corpse, personally. They impressed people.

"Oh, Mis' Marsh," says Mis' McVicar, "we wanted to see you. We're getting up a relief fund. . . ."

I went down in my pocket for a quarter, automatic. I heard their thanks, and I went on. And it came to me how, all over the country, the whole 100,000,000 of us, more or less, had been met up with to contribute something to relief, and we'd all done it. And it had gone over there to this country and to that. But our hearts had ached, individual and silent, the way mine was aching that day — and there wasn't any means of cabling that ache over to Europe. If there was, if that great ache that was in all of us for the folks over there, could just be gathered up and got over to them in one

mass, I thought it would do as much as food and clothes and money to help them.

I stood still by a picket fence I happened to be passing, and I looked down the little street. It had a brick sidewalk and a dirt road and little houses, and the fences hadn't been taken down yet. And all the places looked still and kind of dear.

"They all feel bad," I thought, "just as bad as I do, for folks that's starved. But they can't say so — they can't say so. Only in little dabs of money, sent off separate."

Bennie was swinging on Mis' Holcomb's gate, looking for me. He came running to meet me.

"I found a blue beetle," he says to me. "And that lady's kitty's home, with a bell on. And I got a new nail. An — an — an —"

And I thought: "He ain't no different from them — over there. The little tikes, with no pas and no suppers and nothing to play with, only mebbe a brick to lug."

And there I was, right back to where I started from. And I went out to get supper, with my heart hanging around my neck like a pail of rock.

II

Next day was Memorial Day. And Memorial Day in Friendship Village is something grand.

First the G. A. R. conducts the service in the

Court House yard, with benches put up special, and a speech from out of town and paid for.

Right away afterward everybody marches or drives, according to the state of their pocket-book, out to the Cemetery, to lay flowers on the soldiers' graves; and it's quite an event, because everybody that's got anybody buried out there and that is still alive themselves, they all whisk out the day before and decorate up their graves, so's everybody can see for themselves how intimate their dead is held in remembrance. And everybody walks around to see if so-and-so has thought to send anything from Seattle, or wherenot, *this* year. And if they didn't, it's something to tell about.

Then all the Ladies' Aid Societies serve dinners in the empty store buildings down town, and make what they can. And in the afternoon everybody lounges round and cuts the grass and tinkers with the screens and buys ice cream off the donkey-cart man.

I dressed Bennie up, clean and miserable, in the morning, and went down to the exercises. I couldn't see much, because the woman in front of me couldn't either, and she stood up; and I couldn't hear much, because the paid-for speaker addressed only one-half of his audience, and as usual I wasn't in the right half. But the point is that neither of them limitations mattered. I didn't have to see and

I didn't have to hear. All that I had to do was to feel. And I felt. For I was alive at the time of the Civil War, and all you have to do to me is to touch that spring in me, and I'm back there: Getting the first news, reading about Sumter, sensing the call for 75,000 volunteers, hearing that this one and this one and this one had enlisted, peeking through the fence at Camp Randall where my two brothers were waiting to go; and then living the long four years through, when every morning meant news, and no news meant news, and every night meant more to hear. For years I couldn't open a newspaper without feeling I must look first for the list of the dead. . . .

I set there on the bench in the spring sunshine, without anything to lean against, seeing the back breadths of Mis' Curtsey's gray flowered delaine, and living it all over again, with Bennie hanging on my knee. And it made it a thousand times worse, now that these Memorial Days were passing, with what was going on in Europe still going on.

And I thought: "Oh, I dunno how we can keep up feeling memorial for just our own soldiers, when the whole world's soldiers are lying dead, new every night. . . ."

And getting a little more used to the paid speaker's voice, I could hear some of what he was saying. I could get the names,— Vicksburg, Gettysburg, Shenandoah, Missionary Ridge, all these, over and

over. And my heart ached with every one. But it had a new ache, for names that the whole world will echo with for years to come. And sitting there, with nobody knowing, I says to myself:

" And, O Lord, I memorial all the rest of them — the soldiers of fifty years ago no more than the soldiers of now — the soldiers of Here no more than the soldiers of Over There. O Lord, I memorial them all, and I pray for them that survive over there — put all Your strength on them, Lord, as far as I am concerned, for us survivors here, we don't need You as much as they do — them that's new bereaved and new desolated. For Christ's sake. Amen."

On my way home, I saw Luke Norris sitting out by the door of his office again. He never went to any exercises because his wind-pipe was liable to shut up on him, and it broke up the program some, getting his breath through to him.

" Calliope," he says, " we want you should go on to the Committee for opening the new Town Hall, in about two months from now. We want the jim-dandiest, swell-upest celebration this town has ever had. Twenty years of unexampled prosperity —"

I stood still and stared down on him.

" Honest," I says, " do you want me to help in a prosperity celebration *this* Summer? "

" Sure," he says, " women are in on it."

" Luke," I says. " I dunno how you'll feel about

that when you come to think it over. But I feel —"

Bennie, fussing round on the side-walk, came over, tugging a chunk of wood. I thought at first he was carrying a brick.

I sat down in a handy chair, just inside Luke's door.

"Luke," I says, "Luke! That ain't the kind of a celebration this town had ought to have. You listen here to me. . . ."

III

Sometimes, when I can't sleep, I think about the next two Summer months. I lie awake and think how it all went, that planning, from first to last. I think about the idea, and about how it started, and kindled, and spread, and flamed. And I think about what finally came of it.

For one thing, it was the first living, human thing that Friendship Village ever got up that there wasn't a soul that kicked about. You can't name another thing that any of the town ever went in for, that the rest didn't get up and howl. Pavement — some of us said we couldn't afford it, "not now." New bridge — half of us says we was bonded to the limit as it was. Sewerage — three-fourths of us says for our town it was a engineering impossibility. Buying the electric light plant, that would be pure socialism. Central school building — a vast per cent of us allows it would make it too far for the children to

walk, though out of school hours they run all over the town, scot-free and foot loose, skate, sled and hoop. As a town none of us would unite on nothing. Never, not till this time.

But this time it was different. And even if not anything had come of it, I'd be glad to remember the kind of flash I got from different folks, when we came to tell them about it.

I went first to the Business Men's Association, because it was them that was talking the Town Hall celebration the hardest. I'd been to them before, about playgrounds, about band concerts, about taking care of the park; and some of them were down on us ladies.

"You're always putting up propositions to give money *out*," says one of them once. "Why don't you propose us taking *in* some? What do you think we are? Charity?"

"No," says I to him, "I don't. Nor yet love. You're dollar marks and ciphers, a few of you," I told him, candid, "and those don't make a number."

So when I stood up before them that night, I knew some of them were prepared to vote, automatic, against whatever we wanted. Some of them didn't even have to hear what us ladies suggested in order to be against it. And then I began to talk.

I told them the story of the little fellow with the brick. That stayed in my mind. I never see my

milk-man go along, leaving big, clean bottles in everybody's doors that I didn't image up that little boy standing in the mud on his brick, waiting. And then I mentioned Bennie to them too, that they all knew about. We hadn't heard from his father in two months now, and of course there didn't any of us know. . . .

"I don't need to remind you," I says to them, "how we feel about Europe. Every one of us knows. We try not to talk about it, because there's some of it we can't talk about without letting go. But it's on us all the time. The other day I was trying to think how the world use' to feel, and how I'd felt, before this came on us. I couldn't do it. There can't any of us do it. It's on us, like thick dark, whatever we do. Giving money don't express it. Talking don't express it. . . . Oh, let's do something in this town! Instead of our new Town Hall Prosperity celebration, let's us do something on August 4 to let Europe see how bad we feel. Let's us."

We talked a little more, and then I told them our plan, and we talked over that. I'll never forget them, in the little Town Room with the two gas jets and the chairman's squeaky swivel chair and the tobacco smoke. But there wasn't one voice that dissented, not one. They all sat still, as if they were taking off some spiritual hats that didn't show. It was as if their little idea of a Prosperity celebration

sort of gave up its light to some big sun, blazing there on us, in the room.

The rest was easy. It kind of done itself. In a way it was already done. Something was in people's hearts, and we were just making a way for it to get out. And the air was full of something that was ready to get into people's hearts, and we made a way for it to get in. I don't know but these are our only job on this earth.

August 4 — that's the Europe date that none of America can forget, because it's part our date too.

"What we going to do?" says Bennie, when I was dressing him. It was four months since we had had a letter from his father . . . .

"We're going to do something," I says to him, "that you'll remember, Bennie, when you're an old man." And I gave his shoulders a little shake. "You tell them about it when you're old. Because they'll understand it better then than we do now. You tell them!"

"Yes, ma'am," says Bennie, obedient — and I kind of think he'll do it.

We were to meet in the Court House yard, that's central, and march to the Market Square, that's big. I was to march in the last detachment, and so it came that I could watch them start. And I could see down Daphne Street, with all the closed business houses with the flags hung out at half mast, some

of them with a bow of black cloth tied on. And it was a strange gathering, for everybody was thinking, and everybody knew everybody else was thinking.

We've got a nice band in Friendship Village, that they often send for to play to the City. And when it started off ahead, beating soft with the Beethoven funeral march, I held my breath and shut my eyes. *They were playing for Europe, four thousand miles away.*

Then came the women. That seemed the way to do, we thought — because war means what war means to women. They were wearing white — or at least everybody was that had a white dress, but blue or green or brown marched just the same as if it was white; and they all wore black streamers — just cloth, because we none of us had very much to do with. Every woman in town marched — not one stayed home. And one of the women had thought of something.

"We'd ought not to carry just our flag," she said. "That don't seem real right. Let's us get out our dictionaries and copy off the other nations' flags over there; and make 'em up out of cheese-cloth, and carry 'em."

And that was what we done. And all the women carried the different ones, just as they happened to pick them up, and at half mast.

I don't know as I know who came next, or what

order we arranged them. We didn't have many ex-foreigners living in Friendship Village, but them we had marched, in their own groups. They all came, dressed in their best, and we had cheese-cloth flags of their own nation, made for each group; and they marched carrying them, all together.

There was everybody that worked in the town, marching for Labor. Then come the churches, not divided off into denominations, but just walking, hit or miss, as they came; and though this was due to a superintendent or two getting rattled at the last minute and not falling in line right, it seemed good to see it, for the sorrow of one church for Europe isn't any whit different from the sorrow of every one of the rest. When your heart aches, it aches without a creed.

Last came the children, that I was going to march with; and someway they were kind of the heart of the whole. And just in front of them was the Mothers' Club — twenty or so of them, hard-worked, hopeful women, all wanting life to be nice for their children, and trying, the best they knew, to read up about it at their meetings. And they were marching that day for the motherhood of the nations, and there wasn't one of them that didn't feel it so. And the children . . . when we turned the corner where I could look back on them, I had all I could do — I had all I could do. Three-four hundred of them, bobbing along, carrying any nation's flag that came

handy. And they meant so much more than they knew they meant, like children always do.

"You're going to march for the little boys and girls in Europe that have lost their folks," was all we said to them.

And when I see them coming along, looking round so sweet, dressed up in what they had, and their hair combed up nice by somebody, somehow there came over me the picture of that little fellow with his brick, waiting there for that pint of milk; and I squeezed up so on Bennie's hand that I was walking with, that he looked up at me.

"You're lovin' me too hard in my fingers," he told me, candid.

"Oh, Bennie," I says, "you excuse me. I guess I was squeezing the hand of every little last one of them, over there."

We all came into the Market Square, in the afternoon sunshine, with our little still, peaceful street — laying and listening, and never knowing it was like heaven at all. Every soul in town was there, I don't know of one that didn't go. Even Luke Norris was there, his wind-pipe forgot. We didn't have much exercises. Just being there was exercise enough. We sung — no national airs, and above all, not our own; but just a hymn or two that had in it all we could find of sympathy and love. There wasn't anything else to say, only just those two things. Then Dr. June prayed, brief:

" Lord God of Love, our hearts are full of love this day for all those in Europe who are bereaved. We cannot speak about it very well — we cannot show it very much. But Thou art love to them. Oh, draw us near in spirit to those sorrowing over there, even as Thou are near to them all. Amen."

Then the band played the Chopin funeral march, while we all stood still. When it was done, up in the belfry of the new Town Hall, the new bell that we were so proud of began to toll. And it seemed like the voice of the town, saying something. We all went home to that bell, with the children leading us. And nobody's store was opened again that day. For the spirit of the time, and of Over There, was on the village like a garment, and I suppose none of us spoke of anything else at supper, or when the lamps were lit.

Quite a little while after supper I was sitting on my porch in the dark, when Luke Norris and some of them came in my gate.

" Calliope," said one of the women, " we've been thinking. Don't it seem awful pitiful that Europe can't know how we feel here to-day? "

" I thought of that," I said.

And Luke says: " Well, we've been looking up the cable charges. And we thought we might manage it, to cable something like this:

"Friendship Village memorial exercises held to-day for Europe's dead. Love and sympathy from our village."

"It'll cost a lot," says Luke. "The McVicars want us to add the money to their relief fund instead. But I say *no!*" he struck the porch post with his palm. "Leave us send it, cost or no cost, no matter what."

"I say so too," I says. "But tell me: Where'll you send it to?"

And Luke says simple:

"None of the newspaper dispatch folks'll take it — it ain't news enough for them. So I'm a-going to cable it myself, prepaid, to six Europe newspapers."

Pretty soon they went away, and I took Bennie and walked down to the gate. I thought about that message, going on the wire to Europe. . . . There wasn't any moon, or any sound. The town lay still, as if it was thinking. The world lay still, as if it was feeling.

WHEN THE HERO CAME HOME[1]

NEVER, not if I live till after my dying day, will I forget the evening that Jeffro got home from the War. It was one of the times when what you thought was the earth under your feet dissolves away, and nothing is left there but a little bit of dirt, with miles of space just on the under side of it. It was one of the times when what you thought was the sky over your head is drawn away like a cloth, and nothing is there but miles of space on the upper side of it. And in between the two great spaces are us little humans, creeping 'round, wondering what we're for. And not doing one-ninth as much wondering as you'd think we would.

Jeffro was the little foreign-born peddler, maker of toys, that had come to Friendship Village and lived for a year with his little boy, scraping enough together to send for his wife and baby in the old country. And no sooner had he got them here than the Big War came — and nothing would do but Jeffro must go back and fight it out with his country. And back he went, though how he got there I dunno, for the whole village loaded him down

1 Copyright, 1915, *The Woman's Home Companion.*

so with stuff that he must have been part helpless. How a man could fight with his arms part full of raspberry jam and hard cookies and remedies and apple butter, I'm sure I don't know. But the whole village tugged stuff there for days beforehand. Jeffro was our one hero. He was the only soldier Friendship Village had — except old Bud Babcock, with his brass buttons and his limp and his perfectly everlasting, always-coming-on and never-going-off reminiscences. And so, when Jeffro started off, the whole town turned out to watch him go; and when I say that Silas Sykes gave him a store-suit at cost, more no one could say about nothing. For Silas Sykes is noted — that is, he ain't exactly expected — that is to say, — well, to put it real delicate, Silas is as stingy as a dog with one bone. And a store-suit at cost from him was similar to a gold-mine from anybody else. Or more — more.

Well, then, for six months Jeffro was swallowed up. We never heard a word from him. His little wife went around white and thin, and we got so we didn't ask her if she'd heard from him, because we couldn't stand that white, hunted, et-up look on her face. So we kept still, village delicate. And that's a special kind of delicate.

Then, like a bow from the blue, or whatever it is they say, the mayor of the town got the word from New York that Jeffro was coming home with his right arm gone, honorably discharged. And about

the same time a letter from Europe, from somebody he knew that had got him the money to come with, told how he'd been shot in a sortie and recommended by the captain for promotion.

"A sortie," says Mis' Postmaster Sykes, thoughtful. "What kind of a battle is a sortie, do you s'pose?"

"Land," says Mis' Amanda Toplady, "ain't that what they call an evening musicale?"

When it heard Jeffro was coming home, Friendship Village rose up like one man. We must give him a welcome. This was part because he was a hero, and part because Mis' Postmaster Sykes thought of it first. And most of Friendship Village don't know what it thinks about anything till she thinks it for them.

"We must welcome him royal,"— were her words. "We must welcome him royal. Ladies, let's us plan."

So she called some of us together to her house one afternoon — Mis' Timothy Toplady, Mis' Holcomb-that-was-Mame Bliss, Abigail Arnold, that keeps the Home Bakery, Mis' Photographer Sturgis, that's the village invalid, Mis' Fire Chief Merriman, that her husband's dead, but she keeps his title because we got started calling her that and can't bear to stop — and me. I told her I couldn't do much, being I was training two hundred school children for a Sunday night service that week, and I

was pretty busy myself. But I went. And when we all got there, Mis' Sykes took out a piece of paper tore from an account book, and she says, pointing to a list on it with her front finger that wore her cameo ring:

"Ladies! I've got this far, and it's for you to finish. Jeffro will come in on the Through, either Friday or Saturday night. Now we'll have the band"— that's the Friendship Village Stonehenge Band of nine pieces —" and back of that Bud Babcock, a-carrying the flag. We'll take the one off'n the engine house, because that stands so far back no one will miss it. And then we'll have the Boy Scouts, and the Red Barns's ambulance; and we'll put Jeffro in that; and the boys can march beside of him to his home."

"Well-a," says Mis' Timothy Toplady, "what'll you have the ambulance for?"

"Because we've got no other public ve-hicle," says Mis' Sykes, commanding, "without it's the hearse. If so, name what it is."

And nobody naming nothing, she went on:

"Then I thought we'd have the G. A. R., and the W. R. C. from Red Barns — they'll be glad to come over because they ain't so very much happening for them to be patriotic about, without it's Memorial Day. And then the D. A. R. of Friendship Village and Red Barns will come last, each a-carrying a flag in our hands. Friday is April 18th, and

we did mean to have a Pink Tea to celebrate Paul Revere's ride. But I'm quite sure the ladies'll all be willing to give that up and transfer their patriotic observation over to Jeffro. And we'll all march down in a body, and be there when the train pulls in. What say, Ladies?"

She leaned back, with a little triumphant pucker, like she'd scraped the world for idees, and got them all and defied anybody to add to them.

"Well-a," says Mis' Timothy Toplady, "and then what?"

"Then what?" says Mis' Sykes, irritable. "Why, be there. And wave and cheer and flop our flags. And walk along behind him to his house. And hurrah — and sing, mebbe — oh, we *must* sing, of course!" Mis' Sykes cries, thinking of it for the first time, with her hands clasped.

Mis' Toplady looked troubled.

"Well-a," she says, "what would we sing for?"

"Sing for!" cried Mis' Sykes, exasperated. "Because he's got home, of course."

"With his arm shot off. And his eyes blinded with powder. And him half-starved. And mebbe worse. I dunno, Ladies," says Mis' Toplady, dreamy, "but I'm terrible lacking. But I don't feel like singing over Jeffro."

Mis' Sykes looked at her perfectly withering.

"Ain't you no sense of what'd due to occasions?" says she, regal.

"Yes," says Mis' Toplady, "I have. I guess that's just what's the matter of me. It's the occasion that ails me. I was thinking — well, Ladies, I was wondering just how much like singing we'd feel if we'd *seen* Jeffro's arm shot off him."

"But we *didn't* see it," says Mis' Sykes, final. That's the way she argues.

"Mebbe I'm all wrong," says Mis' Toplady, "but, Ladies, I can't feel like a man getting all shot up is an occasion for jollification. I can't do it."

Us ladies all kind of breathed deep, like a vent had been opened.

"Nor me." "Nor me." "Nor me." Run 'round Mis' Sykes's setting-room, from one to one.

I wish't you could have seen Mis' Sykes. She looked like we'd declared for cannibalism and atheism and traitorism, all rolled into one.

"Ain't you ladies," she says, "no sense of the glories of war? Or what?"

"Or what," says Mis' Toplady. "That's just it — glories of what. I guess it's the *what* part that I sense the strongest, somehow."

Mis' Sykes laid down her paper, and crossed her hands — with the cameo ring under, and then remembered and crossed it *over* — and she says:

"Ladies, facts is facts. You've got to take things as they are."

Abigail Arnold flashed in.

"But you ain't takin' 'em nowheres," she says. "You're leavin' 'em as they are. War is the way it's been for five thousand years — only five thousand times worse."

Mis' Sykes tapped her foot, and made her lips both thin and straight.

"Yes," she says, "and it always will be. As long as the world lasts, there'll be war."

Then I couldn't stand it any longer. I looked her right square in the face, and I says:

"Mis' Sykes. Do you believe that?"

"Certainly I believe it," she says. "Besides, there's nothing in the Bible against war. Not a thing."

"What about 'Thou shalt not kill'?" says I.

She froze me — she fair froze me.

"That," she said, "is an entirely different matter."

"Well," says I, "if you'll excuse me for saying so, it ain't different. But leave that go. What about 'Love thy neighbor'? What about the brotherhood of man? What about —"

She sighed, real patient. "Your mind works so queer sometimes, Calliope," she says.

"Yes, well, mebbe," I says, like I'd said to her before. "But anyhow, it works. It don't just set and set and set, and never hatch nothing. This whole earth has set on war since the beginning, and hatched nothing but death. Do you think, honest,

that we haven't no more invention to us than to keep on a-bungling like this to the end of time?"

Mis' Sykes stomped her foot.

"Look-a-here," she says. "Do you want to arrange something to go down to welcome Jeffro home, or don't you? If you don't, say so."

Mis' Toplady sighed.

"Let's us go down to meet him," she says. "Leave us do that. But don't you expect no singing off me," says she, final. "That's all."

So Mis' Sykes, she went ahead with her plan, and she agreed, grudging, to omit out the singing. And the D. A. R's. put off their Paul Revere Tea, and we sent to the City for more flags. Me, though, I didn't take a real part. I agreed to march, and then I didn't take a real part. I'd took on a good deal more than I'd meant to in training the children for the Sunday night thing, and so I shirked Mis' Sykes's party all I could. Not that I wouldn't be glad to see Jeffro. But I couldn't enthuse the way she meant. By Friday, Mis' Sykes had everything pretty ship-shape, and being we still didn't know which day Jeffro would come, we were all to go down to the depot that night, on the chance; and Saturday as well.

Friday afternoon I was working away on some stuff for the children, when Jeffro's wife came in. The poor little thing was so nervous she didn't know whether she was saying "yes" or "no." She'd

got herself all ready, in a new-ironed calico, and a red bow at her neck.

"Do you think this bow looks too gay?" she says. "It seems gay, and him so sick. But he always liked me to wear red, and it's all the red I've got. It's only cotton ribbin, too," says she, wistful.

She wanted to know what I was doing, and so's to keep her mind off herself, I told her. The hundred children, from all kinds and denominations and everythings, were to meet together in Shepherd's Grove that Sunday night, and I'd fixed up a little exercise for them: One bunch of them were to represent Science, and they were to carry little models of boats and engines and dirigibles and a little wireless tower. And one bunch was to represent Art, and they were to carry colors and figures and big lovely cardboard designs they made in school. And one bunch was to represent Friendship, and they were to come with garlands and arches that connected them each with all the rest. And one was to represent Plenty, with fruit and grain. And one Beauty, and one Understanding — and so on. And then, in the midst of them, I was going to have a little bit of a child walk, carrying a model of the globe in his hands. And they were all going to come to him, one after another, and they were going to give him what they had. And what we'd planned, with music and singing and a trumpeter and everything, was to be all around that.

"I haven't the right child yet to carry the globe though," I says to Jeffro's wife; "I can't find one little enough that's strong enough to lug the thing."

And then, all of a sudden, I remembered her little boy, and Jeffro's little boy. I remembered Joseph. Awful little he was, but with sturdy legs and arms, and the kind of a face that makes you wonder why all little folks don't look the same way. It seems the only way for them to look.

"Why," I says, "look here: Why can't I borrow Joseph for Sunday night, to carry the globe?"

"You can," she says, "without his father won't be wanting him to leave him, when he's just got home so. Mebbe, though," she says, "he's so sick he won't know whether Joseph is there or not —"

She kind of petered off, like she didn't have strength in her to finish with. She never cried though. That was one thing I noticed about her. She acted like crying is one of the things we ought to have outgrown — like dressing in black for mourning, and like beating a drum on the streets to celebrate anything, and like war. Honest, the way we keep on using old-fashioned styles like these makes me feel sorry for the Way-Things-Were-Meant-To-Be.

So it was arranged that Joseph was to carry the globe. And Jeffro's wife went home to wash out his collar so he could go at all. And I flew round so's to be all ready by six o'clock, when we were to

meet at Court House Park and march to the depot to meet Jeffro — so be he come that night.

You know that nice, long, slanting, yellow afternoon light that begins to be left over at six o'clock, in April? When we came along toward Court House Park that night, it looked like that. There was a new fresh green on the grass, and the birds were doing business some, and there was a little nice spring smell in the air, that sort of said "Come on." You know the kind of evening?

We straggled up to the depot, not in regular marching order at all, but just bunched, friendly. Mis' Sykes was walking at the head of her D. A. R. detachment, and she had sewed red and blue to her white duck skirt, and she had a red and blue flower in her hat, and her waist was just redded and blued, from shoulder to shoulder, with badges and bows. Mis' Sykes was awful patriotic as to colors, but I didn't blame her. She'd worn mourning so much, her only chance to wear the becoming shades at all was by putting on her country's colors. Honest, I don't s'pose she thought of that, though — well, I mean — I don't s'pose she really thought — well, let's us go ahead with what I was trying to tell.

While we were waiting at the depot, all disposed around graceful on trucks and trunks, the Friendship Village Stonehenge band started in playing, just to get its hand in. And it played "The Star Spangled Banner." And as soon as ever it started

in, up hopped Silas Sykes onto his feet, so sudden it must have snapped his neck. Mis' Amanda Toplady, that was sitting by me on the telegraph window sill, she looked at him a minute without moving. And then she says to me, low:

"Whenever a man gets up so *awful* sudden when one of his country's airs is played, I always think," she says, "I'd just love to look into his business life, and make perfectly sure that he ain't a-making his money in ways that ain't patriotic to his country, nor a credit to his citizenship — in the real sense."

"Me, too," I says, fervent.

And then we both got to our feet deliberate, Silas having glared at us and all but beckoned to us with his neck. He was singing the song, too — negligent, in his throat. And while he did so, I knew Mis' Toplady and I were both thinking how Silas, a while ago, had done the town out of twice the worth of the property we'd bought from him, for a Humane Society home. And that we'd be paying him for ten years to come. I couldn't help thinking of it. I'm thinking of it now.

Before they were done playing the piece, the train whistled. We lined up, or banked up, or whatever you want to call it. And there we stood when the train slowed and stopped. And not a soul got off.

No; Jeffro wasn't on that train. He didn't come that night at all. And when the next night we all got down there to meet the Through again, in the

same grand style, the identical same thing happened. He didn't come that night, either. And we trailed back from the train, with our spirits dampened a little. Because now he couldn't come till Monday night, being the Through only run to the city on Sundays and didn't come out to Friendship Village at all.

So I had that evening to put my mind on the children, and finish up what I had to do for them. And I was glad. Because the service that I was planning for that night grew on me. It was a Spring festival, a religious festival — because I always think that the coming of Spring is a religious ceremony, really — in the best sense. It's when the new birth begins to come all over the earth at once, gentle, as if somebody was thinking it out, a little at a time. And as if it was hoping and longing for us to have a new life, too.

And yet I was surprised that they'd leave me have the festival on Sunday. We've got so used to thinking of religion — and one or two brands of patriotism — as the only holy things there are. I didn't know but when I mentioned having Science and Art and Friendship and Beauty and Plenty and Understanding and Peace at my Sunday evening service, they might think I was over-stepping some. I don't know but they did, too. Only they indulged me a little.

So everybody came. The churches had all agreed

to unite, being everybody's children were in the festival. And by five o'clock that Sunday afternoon the whole of Shepherd's Grove was full of Friendship Village folks, come from all over the town and out on the edges, and in the country, to see the children have their vesper festival. That's what I'd called it — a vesper festival, so it'd help them that had their doubts.

There weren't any seats, for it wasn't going to be long, and I had them all stand in a pleasant green spot in the grove, on two sides of the little grass-grown road that wound through the wood, and down which, pretty soon, I was going to have Joseph come, carrying the globe of the world.

When we were ready, and the little trumpeter we'd got had stilled them all with the notes he'd made, that were like somebody saying something and really meaning it — the way a trumpet does — then the children began to sing, soft and all together, from behind a thicket of green that they'd made themselves:

"Don't you wish we had a place
Where only bright things are,
Like the things we dream about,
And like a star?

"Don't you wish the world would turn
For an hour or two,
And run back the other way
And be made new?

"Don't you wish we all could be
What we know we are,
'Way inside, where a Voice speaks,
Far — and near — and far?"

And then they came out — one after another of the groups I've told you about — Science, and Art, and Friendship, and Plenty, and the others. And each one said what they knew how to do to the world to make that wish come true. I don't need to tell you about that. You know. If you have friendship or plenty or beauty in your life, you know. If only we could get enough of them!

Out they all came, one after another. It was very still in the wood. The children's voices were sweet and clear. They all had somebody there that they were near and dear to. The whole time was quiet, and close up to, and like the way things were meant to be. And like the way things might be. And like the way things will be — when we let them.

Then there was a little pause. For they'd all told what might be, and now it was time to signal Joseph to come running up the road, carrying the globe in its orbit, and speaking for the World, and asking all these lovely things to come and take possession of it, and own it, and be it. But, just as I got ready to motion to him, I had to wait, for down the grassy road through Shepherd's Grove, where there wasn't much travel, was coming an automo-

bile, though one doesn't pass that way from the city once in ten years.

We all drew back to let it pass among us. And, in that little pause, we looked, curious, to see who was in it. And then a whisper, and then a cry, came from the nearest, and from them back, and then from them all at once. For, propped up on the seat, was Jeffro. He'd come to the city on the Through, that doesn't come to Friendship Village Sundays, and they'd brought him home this way.

I dunno how I thought of it — don't it seem as if something in you works along alone, if only you'll keep your thinking still? It did that now. Almost before I knew I was going to do it, I signed to the man to stop, and I stepped right up beside the car where Jeffro sat, looking like a ghost of a man. And I says:

"Mr. Jeffro! Mr. Jeffro! Are you too sick to leave us welcome you home?"

He smiled then, and put out his hand — the one hand that he'd come back with. And from somewhere in the crowd, Jeffro's wife got to the car, and got the door open, and leaned there beside him. And we all waited a minute — but one minute was the very best we could do. Then everybody came pressing up round the car to shake his hand. And I slipped back to the bugler we had, and I says:

"Blow! Blow the loudest you ever blew in your life. *Blow!*"

He blew a blast, silver clear, golden clear, sunlight clear. And I sent him through the crowd, blowing, and making a path right up to the automobile. Then I signed to the children, and I had them come down that open aisle. And they came singing, all together, the song they had sung behind the thicket. And they pressed close around the car, singing still:

"Don't you wish we had a place
Where only bright things are,
Like the things we dream about,
And like a star?"

And there they came to meet him — Art and Science and Plenty and Beauty and Friendship — Friendship. I don't know whether he understood what they said. I don't know whether he understood the meaning of what they carried — for Jeffro wasn't quite sure of our language all the time. But, oh, he couldn't misunderstand the spirit of that time or of those folks.

He got to his feet, Jeffro did, his face kind of still and solemn. And just then Mis' Silas Sykes, in a black dress, without a scrap of red or blue about her, stepped up to him, her face fair grief-struck. And she says:

"Oh, Mr. Jeffro. The D. A. R., and the G. A. R., and the W. R. C. was to welcome you back from the glories of war And here you've took us unbeknownst."

He looked round at us — and this is what I'll never forget — not if I live till my dying day:

"The glories of war!" he says over. "The glories of war! You do not know what you say! I tell you that I have seen mad dogs, mad beasts of prey — but I do not know what it is they do. The glories of war! Oh, my God, does nobody know that we are all mad together?"

Jeffro's wife tried to quiet him, but he shook her off.

"Listen," he said. "I have gone to war and lived through hell to learn one thing. I gif it to you: *Life is something else than what we think it is.* That is true. *Life is something else than what we think it is.* When we find it out, we shall stop this devil's madness."

Just then a little cry came from somewhere over back in the road.

"My papa! It *is* my papa!" it saîd. And there came running Joseph, that had heard his father's voice, and that we had forgot' all about. We let him through the crowd, and he climbed up in the car, and his father took him in his one arm. And there they sat, with the globe that Joseph carried, the world that he carried, in beside them.

We all began moving back to the village, before much of anybody knew it — the automobile with Jeffro in it, and Jeffro's wife, and Jeffro's little boy. And with the car went, not soldiers, not flags, not

the singing of any one nation's airs — but the children, with those symbols of the life that is living and building life — as fast as we'll let it build. Jeffro didn't know what they were, I guess — though he knew the love and the kindliness and the peace of the time. But I knew, and more of us knew, that in that hour lay all the promise of the new day, when we understand what we are: Gods, fallen into a pit.

We went up the street with the children singing:

> " Don't you wish we all could be
> What we know we are,
> 'Way inside, where a Voice speaks,
> Far — and near — and far? "

When we got to Jeffro's gate, Mis' Sykes came past me.

" Ain't it sad? " she says. " Not a soldier, nor a patriotic song, nor a flag to meet our hero? "

I looked at her, kind. I felt kind to all the world, because somehow I felt so sure, so certain sure, of things.

" Don't you worry, Mis' Sykes," I says. " I kind of feel as if more was here to meet Jeffro than we've any notion of."

For it was one of the times when what you thought was the earth under your feet dissolves away, and nothing is left there but a little bit of dirt, with miles of space just on the under side of it. It was one of the times when what you thought was the

sky over your head is drawn away like a cloth, and nothing is there but miles of space high on the upper side of it. And in between these two great spaces are us little humans, kind of creeping round — wondering what we're for.

"FOLKS" [1]

I DUNNO whether you like to go to a big meeting or not? Some folks seem to dread them. Well, I love them. Folks never seem to be so much folks as when I'm with them, thousands at a time.

Well, once annually I go to what's a big meeting for us, on the occasion of the Friendship Village Married Ladies' Cemetery Improvement Sodality's yearly meeting. . . . I always hope folks won't let that name of us bother them. We don't confine our attention to Cemetery any more. But that's been the name of us for twenty-four years, and we got started calling it that and we can't bear to stop. You know how it is — be it institutions or constitutions or ideas or a way to mix the bread, one of our deformities is that we hate to change.

"Seems to me," says Mis' Postmaster Sykes once, "if we should give up that name, we shouldn't be loyal nor decent nor loving to the dead."

"Shucks," says I, "how about being loyal and decent and loving to the living?"

"Your mind works so queer sometimes, Calliope," says Mis' Sykes, patient.

1 Copyright, 1914, *La Follette's Magazine.*

"Yes — well," I says, "mebbe. But anyhow, it works. It don't just set and set and set, and never hatch nothing."

So we continued to take down bill-boards and put in shrubbery and chase flies and dream beautiful, far-off dreams of sometime getting in sewerage, all under the same undying name.

Well, at our annual meeting that night, we were discussing what should be our work the next year. And suggestions came in real sluggish, being the thermometer had been trying all day to climb over the top of its hook.

Suggestions run about like this:

1. See about having seats put in the County House Yard.

2. See about getting the blankets in the Calaboose washed oftener.

3. Get trash baskets for the streets.

4. Plant vines over the telegraph poles.

5. See about Main Street billboards —again.

6. See about the laundry soft coal smoke — again.

7. See about window boxes for the library — again.

And these things were partitioned out to committees one by one, some to strike dry, shallow sand, some to get planted on the bare rock, and some to hit black dirt and a sunny spot with a watering can,

or even a garden hose handy. You know them different sorts of soil under committees?

Then up got Mis' Timothy Toplady — that dear, abundant woman. And we kind of rustled expectant, because Mis' Toplady is one of the women that looks across the edges of what's happening at the minute, and senses what's way over there beyond. She's one of the women that never shells peas without seeing beyond the rim of her pan.

And that night she says to Sodality:

" Ladies, I hear that up to the City next week there's going to be some kind of a woman's convention."

Nobody said anything. Railroad wrecks, volcanoes, diamonds, conventions and such never seemed real *real* to us in the village.

" It seems to be some kind of a once-in-two-years affair," Mis' Toplady went on, " and I read in the paper how it had a million members, and how they came 10,000 to a time to their meetings. Well, now," she ends up, serene, " I've rose to propose that, bein' it's so near, Sodality send a delegate up there next week to get us some points."

" What points do we need, I should like to know," says Mis' Postmaster Sykes, majestic. " Ain't we abreast of whatever there is to be abreast of? "

" That's what I dunno," says Mis' Toplady. " Leave us find out."

" Well," says Mis' Sykes, " my part, expositions

and conventions are horrible to me. *I'm* no club woman, anyhow," says she, righteous.

All the keeping still I ever done in my life when I'd ought to wouldn't put nobody to sleep. I spoke right up.

" Ain't our Sodality a club, Mis' Sykes? " I says.

" Oh, our little private club here," says Mis' Sykes, " is one thing — carried on quiet and womanly among ourselves. But a great big public convention is no place for a woman that respects her home."

" Why," I says, " Mis' Sykes, that was the way we were arguing when clubs began. It took quite a while to outgrow it. But ain't we past all that by now? "

" Women's homes," she says, " and women's little home clubs are enough to occupy any woman. A convention is men's business."

" It is if it is," says I, " but think how often it is that it ain't."

Mis' Toplady kept on, thoughtful.

" Anyway, I been thinking," she says, " why don't we leave the *men* join Sodality? "

I dunno if you've ever suggested a revolution? Whether I'm in favor of any particular revolution or not, it always makes a nice, healthy minute. And it's such an elegant measuring rod for the brains of folks.

" Why, how can we? " says Mis' Sykes. " We're

the Married *Ladies'* Cemetery Improvement Sodality."

" Is that name," says Mis' Toplady, mild, " made up out o' cast-iron, Mis' Sykes? "

" But our constitution says we shall consist of fifty married ladies," says Mis' Sykes, final.

" Did we make that constitution," says I, " or did it make us? Are we a-idol-worshiping our constitution or are we a-growing inside it, and bursting out occasional? "

" If you lived in back a ways, Calliope,"— Mis' Sykes begun.

" Well," says I, " I might as well, if you're going to use *any* rule or any law for a ball and chain for the leg instead of a stepping-stone for the feet."

Mis' Fire Chief Merriman looked up from her buttonholing.

" But we don't *want* to do men's work, do we? " says she, distasteful. " Leave them do their club work and leave us do our club work, like the Lord meant."

" Well — us women tended Cemetery quite a while," says I, " and the death rate wasn't confined to women, exclusive. Graves," says I, " is both genders, Mis' Fire Chief."

Mis' State Senator Pettigrew, she chimed in.

" So was the park. So was paving Main Street. So was getting pure milk. So was cleaning up the slaughter house — parse them and they're both gen-

ders, all of them. Of course let's us take men into the Sodality," says she.

Mis' Sykes put her hand over her eyes.

"My g-g-grandmother organized and named Sodality," she said. "I can't bear to see a change."

"Cheer up, Mis' Sykes," I says, "you'll be a grandmother yourself some day. Can't you do a little something to let *your* grandchildren point back to? Awful selfish," I says, "not to give them something to brag about."

We didn't press the men proposition any more. We see it was too delicate. But bye and bye we talked it out, that we'd have a big meeting of everybody, men and women, and discuss over what the town needed, and what the Sodality ought to undertake.

"That'll be real democratic," says Mis' Sykes, contented. "We'll give everybody a chance to express their opinion — and then afterwards we can take up just what we please."

And we decided that was another reason for sending a delegate to the woman's convention, to get ahold of somebody, somehow, to come down to Friendship Village and talk to us.

"Be kind of nice to show off to somebody, too," says Mis' Fire Chief Merriman, complacent, "what a nice, neat, up-to-date little town we've got."

"Without the help of no great big clumsy convention either," Mis' Sykes stuck in.

Then the first thing I heard was Mis' Amanda Toplady up onto her feet nominating me to go for a delegate to that convention, fare paid out of the Cemetery Improvement Treasury.

Guess what the first thought was that came to my head? Oh, ain't it like women had been wrapped up in something that we're just beginning to peek out of? Guess what I thought. Yes, that was it. When I spoke out my first thought, I says:

" Oh, *ladies,* I can't go. I ain't got a rag fit to wear."

It took quite a while to persuade me. All the party dress I had was out of the spare-room curtains, and I didn't have a wrap at all — I'm just one of them jacket women. And finally I says to them: " You look here. Suppose I write a note to the president of the whole thing, and tell her just what clothes I have got, and ask her if anybody'd best go, looking like me."

And that was what I did do. I kept a copy of the letter I wrote her. I says:

" Dear President:

" Us ladies have heard about the meeting set for next week, and we thought we'd send somebody up from our Friendship Village Married Ladies Cemetery Improvement Sodality. And we thought we'd send me. But I wouldn't want to come and have everybody ashamed of me. I've only got my two years suit, and a couple of waists and one thin dress — and they're all just every day — or not so much

so. I'm asking you, like I feel I can ask a woman, president or not. Would you come at all, like that, if you was me.

"Respectfully,

"CALLIOPE MARSH."

I kept her answer too, and this is what she said:

"Dear Miss Marsh:

"Just as I have told my other friends, let me tell you: By all means we want you to come. Do not disappoint us. But I believe that your club is not entitled to a delegate. So I am sending you this card. Will you attend the meeting, and the reception as my guest?"

And then her name. Sometimes, when I get discouraged about us, I take out that letter, and read it through.

I remember when the train left that morning, how I looked back on the village, sitting there in its big arm chair of hills, with green cushions of woods dropped around, and wreaths of smoke curling up from contented chimneys. And over on the South slope our big new brick county house, with thick lips and lots of arched eye-brows, the house that us ladies was getting seats to put in the yard of.

"Say what who will," thinks I, "I love that little town. And I guess it's just about as good as any of us could expect."

I got to the City just before the Convention's evening meeting. I brushed my hair up, and put on my cameo pin, and hurried right over to the

hall. And when I showed them my card, where do you guess they took me? Up to one of the rows on the stage. Me, that had never faced an audience except with my back to them — as organist in our church. (That sounds so grand that I'd ought to explain that I can't play anything except what's wrote natural. So I'm just organist to morning service, when I can pick out my own hymns, and not for prayer meeting when anybody is likely to pipe up and give out a song just black with sharps and flats.) There were a hundred or more on the stage, and there were flowers and palms and lights and colors. I sat there looking at the pattern of the boards of the stage, and just about half sensing what was going on at first. Then I got my eyes up a little ways to some pots of blue hydrangeas on the edge of the stage. I had a blue hydrangea in my yard home, so they kind of gave me courage. Then my eye slipped over the foot-lights, to the first rows, to the back rows, to the boxes, to the galleries — over the length and breadth of that world of folks — thousands of them — as many as five times them in my whole village. And they were gathered in a room the size and the shape and — almost the height of a village green.

The woman that was going to talk that night I'd never even heard of. She was a woman that you wouldn't think of just as a woman or a wife or a mother or a teacher same as some. No, you

thought of her first of all as folks. And she had eyes like the living room, with all the curtains up. She'd been talking a little bit before I could get my mind off the folks and on to her. But all of a sudden something she was saying rang out just like she had turned and said it to me. I cut it out of the paper afterwards — this is it, word for word:

"*You who believe yourselves to be interested in social work, ask yourselves what it is that you are interested in really. I will tell you. Well, whether you know it or not, fundamentally what you care about is* PEOPLE. *Let us say it in a better way. It is* FOLKS."

I never took my eyes off her face after that. For "folks" is a word I know. Better than any other word in the language, I know that word "folks."

She said: "Well, let us see what, in clubs, our social work has been: At first, Clean-up days, Planting, Children's Gardens, School Gardens, Bill Boards, the Smoke Nuisance. That is fine, all of it. These are what we must do to make our towns fit to live in.

"Then more and more came the need to get nearer to folks — and yet nearer. And then what did we have? Fly campaigns, Garbage Disposal, Milk and Food Inspection, Playgrounds, Vocational Guidance, Civic and Moral training in the schools, Sex Hygiene, Municipal Recreation, Housing. All this has brought us closer and closer to folks — not

only to their needs but to what they have to give. That is fine — all of it. That is what we have to do.

" But who is it that has been doing it? Those of us to whom life has been a little kind. Those of us on whom the anguish and the toil of life do not fall the most heavily. We are free to do these things. Clean, cleanly clothed, having won — or been given — a little leisure, we are free to meet together and to turn our thought to the appearance of our cities — and to the other things. That is a great step. We have come very far, my friends.

" But is it far enough?

" Here in this hall with us to-night there are others besides ourselves. Each of us from near towns and far cities comes shepherding a cloud of witnesses. Who are these? Say those others, clean and leisured, who live in your town, and yours. Say the school children, that vast, ambiguous host, from your town and yours and yours. Say the laboring children — five hundred thousand of them in the states which you in this room represent — my friends, the *laboring children.* Say, the seven million and more women workers in your states and mine. Say the men,— the wage earners,— toilers with the hands, multitudes, multitudes, who on the earth and beneath it, in your town and yours and yours, are at labor now, that we may be here — clean and at leisure. I tell you they are all here,

sitting with us, shadowy. And the immediate concerns of these are the immediate concerns of us. And social work is the development of the chance for all of us to participate more abundantly in our common need to live.

"As fast as in you lies, let your civic societies look farther than conserving or planting or beautifying, or even cleaning. Give these things to committees — important committees. And turn you to the fundamentals. Turn to the industries and to the government and to the schools of your towns and there work, for there lie the hidings of your power. Here are the great tasks of the time: The securing of economic justice for labor, the liberation of women, and the great deliverances: From war, from race prejudice, from prostitution, from alcohol, and at last from poverty.

"These are the things *we* have to do. Not they. We. You and I. These are your tasks and mine and the tasks of those who have not our cleanliness nor our leisure, but who will help as fast as ever we learn how to share that help — as fast as ever we all learn how to work as one. . . . Oh, my friends, we must dream far. We must dream the farthest that folks can go. For life is something other than that which we believe it to be."

When she'd got through, right in the middle of the power and the glory that came in my head, something else flew up and it was:

1. See about having seats put in the County House Yard.

2. See about getting the blankets in the Calaboose washed oftener.

3. See about — and all the rest of them.

And instead, *this* was what we were for, till all of us have earned the right to something better. This was what we could help to do. It was like the sky had turned into a skylight, and let me look up through. . . .

My seat was on the side corner of the platform, nearest to her. She had spoken last, and everybody was rustling to go. I didn't wait a minute. I went down close beside the footlights and the blue hydrangeas, and held out my letter. And I says:

" Oh! Come to Friendship Village. You must come. We were going to get the blankets in the calaboose washed oftener — and — we — oh, you come, and make us see that life is the kind of thing you say it is, and show us that we belong! "

She took the letter that Mis' Fire Chief Merriman had composed for me, and right while forty folks were waiting for her, she stood and read it. She had a wonderful kind of tender smile, and she smiled with that. And then all she says to me was all I wanted:

" I'll come. When do you want me? "

Never, not if I live till after my dying day, will I forget the day that I got back to Friendship Village.

When it came in sight through the car window, I saw it — not sitting down on its green cushions now, but standing tip-toe on its heaven-kissing hills — waiting to see what we could do to it. When you come home from a big convention like that, if you don't step your foot on your own depot platform with a new sense of consecration to your town, and to all living things, then you didn't deserve your badge, nor your seat, nor your privilege. And as I rode into the town, thinking this, and thinking more than I had words to think with, I wanted to chant a chant, like Deborah (but pronounced Déborah when it's a relative). And I wanted to say:

"Oh, Lord. Here we live in a town five thousand strong, and we been acting like we were five thousand weak — and we never knew it.

"And because we had learned to sweep up a few feet beyond our own door-yard, and had found out the names of a few things we had never heard of before, we thought we were civic. We even thought we were social.

"Civic. Social. We thought these were new names for new things. And here they are only bringing in the kingdom of God, that we've known about all along.

"Oh, it isn't going to be brought in by women working along alone. Nor by men working along alone. It's going to come in by whole towns rising

up together men and women, shoulder to shoulder, and nobody left out, organized and conscious and working like one folk. Like one folk."

Mis' Amanda Toplady and Mis' Holcomb-that-was-Mame-Bliss were at the depot to meet me. I remember how they looked, coming down the platform, with an orange and lemon and water-melon sunset idling down the sky.

And then Mis' Holcomb-that-was-Mame-Bliss says to me, with her eye-brows all pleased and happy:

"Oh, Calliope, we've got the new seats for the County House Yard. They're iron, painted green, with a leaf design on the back."

"And," chimes in the other one, "we've got them to say they'll wash the blankets in the calaboose every quarter."

I wanted to begin right then. But I didn't. I just walked down the street with them, a-carrying my bag and my umbrella, and when one of them says, "Well, I'm sure your dress don't look so very much wore after all, Calliope," I answered back, casual enough, just as if I was thinking about what she said: "Well, I give you my word, I haven't once thought about myself in con-nection with that dress."

Together we went down Daphne Street in the afternoon sun. And they didn't know, nor Friendship

Village didn't know, that walking right along with us three was the tramp and the tramp of the feet of a great convention that had come home with me, right there to our village. Oh, I mean the tramp and the tramp of the feet of the folks in the whole world.

THE END

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